

Moreton Abbey ;

O R T H E

FATAL MYSTERY.

A N O V E L,
IN TWO VOLUMES.

By the late

Miss HARRIET CHILCOT,

of *BATH*.

(AFTERWARDS MRS. MEZIERE.)

Authorefs of *ELMAR* and *ETHLINDA*, a
Legendary Tale, &c. &c.

VOLUME the SECOND.

SOUTHAMPTON:

Printed and Sold by T. BAKER, Sold also by
J. BEW, Pater-Noster-Row, LONDON.

Morton Abbey

FATAL MYSTERY



Mrs. Harriet Chilcot

(AT THE WARD'S MRS. LESTER)

Annals of Harriet and Ethelinda

Legends of the East

VOLUME the SECOND

SOUTHAMPTON.
Printed and sold by T. Barker, Sole and by
J. Baw, Roper, Nelson Row, London.



LETTER I.

Mrs. BELLmour to Miss COLVILLE.

A G A I N, my dear Louisa, I resume my pen, to proceed with the history I have promised to inform you of,—again I resume the story of my sister.

T he old man stood motionless with

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anguish.—Then hastily pressing one hand upon his head and the other upon his heart, he gazed a while—the sighs, too big for breath, swell'd his aching heart, and the pangs which convulsed and rent his bosom, bereft him of all sense.—He fell lifeless at her side. They would have advanced to support him, but were deprived of motion;—they stood in that mute astonishment of grief, which pictured more the feelings of their hearts than volumes of words.—While they were thus lost to remembrance and to reflection, life again re-entered its nearly evacuated seat. The old man rose upon his hand, and they flew to assist him. He opened his eyes, which were immediately fixed on the dead pale corpse of his child. He

survived

surveyed her with a mixture of that pitious anguish and love, which would have forced its way to the heart of the most obdurate, and bid its feelings bleed. They supported him, and he gazed a while as if insensible to all around him. His pale lips quivered, and his eyes were dim with the blood drawn tear of his heart;—but he could not speak,—he was overwhelmed with grief to distraction, and the powers of utterance were entirely vanished.—At length, after some time struggling with agony, and looking at each of them by turns,—words found a passage from his tortured soul;—“you are young” he cried, —“the world has not”—here he was obliged to pause;—“the glow
“of innocence shines in your face,—

“ she was once ” (gazing at his
 child) “ —but a villain—hear, gentle
 “ maid, attend an old man’s tale,
 “ the world, if heaven and life will
 “ lend my aching soul, I’d tell—
 “ Oh ! she was fairer than the open-
 “ ing rose,——the moon that silvers
 “ o’er the mountain top was not more
 “ chaste—Oh ! not a fainted cherub
 “ in yon heaven, could boast a purer
 “ soul. Great God ! why was I
 “ absent ?—But in my absence—my
 “ hopeless fortune call’d me far from
 “ hence, a faithless friend to whom
 “ I trusted all my wealth,—my wife,
 “ —my child,—and on whose friend-
 “ ship liv’d my ev’ry hope,—but in
 “ my absence from this once lovely,
 “ now neglected spot, his vile arts
 “ lur’d to place them in the sphere
 “ of

" of brighter fortune;—how ignorant
 " she of such his base design, since his
 " dark bosom hid its fell intent!—
 " At last she fell a victim to his art,
 " —and her hopeless mother, think-
 " ing, tho innocent, herself the cause,
 " sunk under the heavy load with
 " which her soul was oppressed.—
 " It was too much for her delicate
 " nature to sustain, and it struck but
 " too successfully at her life.—What
 " a trying, calamitous scene had I
 " to undergo?—When I returned
 " with blessings for my friend,—
 " thinking to pass in joy my rest of
 " life, I flew to greet him,—but,
 " oh! sight of inexpressible horror,
 " —on his curs'd bed my hapless
 " wife lay stretch'd,—a cold dead
 " corpse,—beside it trembling on
 " her

" her bended knees, imploring him
 " no more to tempt her soul, lay my
 " dear daughter. Struck motionless
 " —a while I stood unseen—the
 " savage monster turn'd,—he met my
 " sword,—he fell.—Thou sacred God,
 " whose eye I soon shall meet, for-
 " give my rage!—Hoping her life,
 " sweet penitential saint! I brought
 " her here, her God has got her now.
 " —I too am following, and now
 " I come."—He fell—and expired.

My sister fainted,—and being torn
 with grief for the dead and fear for the
 living, the heart of Moreton was now
 the seat of anguish:—She recovered
 at length, but the scene of agony was
 still before her,—he therefore led her
 from it, and they soon regained the
 carriage

carriage which was now waiting for them.—They pursued their journey without any other incident worth repeating, and reached the gay capital, the seat of dissipation and bane of happiness. They entered it with hearts yet softened,—yet aching with the remembrance of the recent tale of woe they had so lately heard, and the fatal scene they had just been witness of. They found their aunt, the good Mrs. Osborne, who received them with those tokens of friendship which speak more than words the feelings of the heart. She received them with pleasure,—with delight.—She had been some years a widow,—and she had an only son then at the university, who was nearly about the same age with my brother.—But she had not long before

lost a daughter, with which she had been much affected;—and this might be one reason for the invitation we have mentioned as occasioning this journey, as she hoped to find some consolation in the company of Miss Moreton, to supply the place of her departed Amelia.—If the first day proved to be a pleasing one, the second was found to be a happy one;—and days and weeks insensibly glided away in continued felicity.—Mrs. Osborne was a woman of an elevated understanding and a liberal turn of mind.—She had seen the world, and was sensible of its pleasures, its gaieties, and its allurements; and she knew how to check that impetuous flame which often burns with too great intenseness in the breasts of the young
and

and untutored.—Her natural good sense had been cultivated in a manner which evidenced the benignity of her heart; the benevolence of her disposition was improved and extended to a pitch which exalted and ennobled humanity.—Scarce had her ear heard a tale of sorrow, or a plaintive note of melancholy and distress, ere it reached her heart, and wak'd each feeling there.—They wak'd,—not to a transient ejaculation of pity and compassion,—not to a spiritless commiseration,—of the wretchedness and calamity of others,—but to an actual participation of their griefs;—they extended to her head,—they were manifested in those noble and generous deeds which brought comfort and re-

lief to the afflicted, and bid the mourner smile.

Such was the lady, with whom Mr. and Miss Moreton had taken up their abode. As she was married very young, she was not then more than thirty-seven years of age, and was left a widow in early life. Like her brethren and sisters of the world, she had been visited by the hard hand of grief, and the cup of affliction had been administered in a plentiful portion;—her history therefore was intermixed with some deep shades of sorrow and anguish.—Death from her arms had snatched one of the most amiable of men, and left her bosom the gloomy seat of grief and woe. This had fixed a pensive melancholy on

on her mind, and she had never thoroughly overcome her misfortune. —But as her sorrows were only her own, she did not trouble the happy with her reflections,—they were placed in her own breast;—they served as a hoard whereupon she might feast in private without danger of interruption, —though she appeared in company to be totally estranged from grief, as if all her wishes were only to contribute to the happiness of others.

Thus happily situated, Mr. and Miss Moreton could not think of returning.—Accordingly they wrote to Mrs. Rivers, which was supported by Mrs. Osborne, requesting her to be happy on their account, as under

Mrs. Osborne's protection they were perfectly secure from the snares of the world, and could have nothing to fear.*—This was necessary as well out of respect to Mrs. Rivers, as to

* How often are mankind, under an apprehension of perfect security and the calmest repose, subject to the greatest dangers and calamities!—How promising was this pleasing situation to a mind which had never been exposed to the crosses and upward accidents of life!—and yet how little felicity was it productive of!—But I will not anticipate the result;—It shall suffice to have made this reflection, *en passant*, that the fair reader may not be induced to infer too much happiness from a condition which was in the highest degree flattering in prospect. Editor.

relieve

relieve her anxious mind from untoward apprehensions; for as Miss Moreton had never before been an hour from home and her brother's education had been superintended by a worthy clergyman, on whom the world had cast its frowns,—the commerce of the world was what they were little acquainted with.—But Mr. Moreton had profited beyond his years by the instructions of his worthy tutor,—he possessed every thing that could exalt humanity, or ennoble the soul of man;—he was one, who, if he had lived in those fabulous ages when gods were supposed to visit the earth and hold converse with men, would have been ranked amongst the number.—Such was the tutor of Mr. Moreton, and such was the pupil.

They

They had now passed a considerable time with their aunt, and were preparing, though reluctantly, for their departure, when the son of Mrs. Osborne, who had been some time hoped for though not greatly expected, suddenly arrived, without any previous direct intimation of his intentions to pay a visit to his respectable parent. They could not in good manners think of leaving Mrs. Osborne as proposed, and it now became necessary that they should prolong their visit ! they were therefore again detained, and were again happy in this new occasion for it.

It might be said of young Osborne that he was a model of which there

are

are but few copies.—The fairest designs of nature had been united in his formation;—he had a sensibility of expression in his eye which told the feelings of his heart ere his tongue could reveal them in the language of speech.—Free,—affable,—accomplished—without foppery,—and what is more, without pedantry,—the son of Mrs. Osborne was all fancy could form him. His imagination was extended beyond conception, and he was unrestrained in every wish of his heart;—in every wish of his heart, he was at full liberty to act at pleasure, and being too generous to suspect, was therefore too open to the designs of duplicity.—Happy son, you will exclaim, whose accomplishments render him worthy of such a mother!—But stop, my
 Louisa,

Louisa,—decide not too hastily on the character of one, who with all these advantages of mind and form, was unworthy of being the son of the good and amiable Mrs. Osborne.—She lov'd him more than life, and for his sake alone had struggled with her griefs, and supported her spirits under the greatest oppression,—but she lamented his wild, impetuous temper,—she saw with concern the danger he was exposed to from his credulous, unsuspecting, disposition,—she beheld his failings and his weakness with extreme concern, which while she lamented, she feared she could not amend.

It was some consolation to the good Mrs. Osborne to perceive the harmony
which

which subsisted in her family, and she hoped this might effect what, she well-perceived, her parental admonitions would not be able to accomplish. —But I must lay down my pen, my dear Louisa, and reserve the sequel to another opportunity, till which time, I am,

as ever,

Your's,

MARIA BELLMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER II.

Mrs. BELLMOUR to Miss COLVILLE.

A G A I N I resume my pen,
 my dear Louisa, to proceed
 with the history of my unfortunate
 sister.—Though, as I informed you
 the good Mrs. Osborne laboured un-
 der anxiety with respect to her son,
 —she had hopes that the pleasure,
 gaiety, and delight which reigned in
 the happy dwelling, might insensibly
 divert his mind to a more composed
 and

and settled state.—In this agreeable and pleasing manner weeks passed away, and they seemed but hours.—My brother and Mr. Osborne were inseparable, and Mrs. Osborne could scarcely live without Fanny.—The hour of departure was now in appearance more distant than ever.—All was delight and transport—and time seemed to have loaded his wings with happiness, on purpose to disperse it around the gay mansion.—Thus blest'd with felicity, did the hours insensibly glide away.—But alas! this golden dream was not to last;—the iron hand of adverse fortune began to awake them out of this reverie, and to disfigure the fair image which this illusion had placed before them.—There was a total change;—and the

the bosom of Fanny began to be agitated by feelings till now unknown. —A new world seemed, as it were, to display itself to her view.—She found her heart, which till now had reposed in peace within her bosom,—torn by contending passions.—She wished to leave that dwelling of pain, which had hitherto been the seat of pleasure ;—and yet she had no desire to forsake it, so strongly was she attracted by sensations which she wished to subdue. —Another cause was not a little to be considered, as tending to increase the perplexity of her breast.—Young Osborne, she had observed, was more abroad of late than usual ;—and she could not perceive, without the most painful concern, that when at home he endeavoured to avoid her.

—This

—This made her heart the seat of unhappiness and grief.—Would he had—as she would often exclaim to herself,—would he had behaved as indifferent at first,—I should still have esteemed him, but I should not have been unhappy.—Mrs. Osborne had observed the strangeness of his behaviour, and was extremely displeased with his indifference.—The wish of her soul was to see them united by the most sacred ties, and to call them her children;—which such conduct gave her little reason to hope for.

In this way did things pass on for a considerable time, till at length young Osborne again returned to join the domestic scenes of life, which restored peace and happiness to the whole.—

But

But his usual vivacity and former sprightliness had entirely forsaken him; —a secret melancholy preyed upon his heart, and affected his health.—He had no life to appearance but when he was in the company of Fanny;—and even then, frequently when he was alone with her, he would gaze a while with astonishment,—then start back as if struck with apprehension of some sudden cause of horror and amazement, and instantly leave the room.—She saw that his heart was distracted with inexpressible anguish nor was her bosom less tortured with agony and distress, to think what could occasion it.—It had always been her custom at home, which she had here continued, to rise early before the rest of the family and enjoy the pleasure

pleasure of a walk in the garden;—
 she had now more than usual reason
 to pursue this exercise,—not indeed
 for pleasure, for the idea of this was
 totally banished,—but to ruminate
 on the situation of her own heart and
 that of the unhappy Osborne.—For
 such purpose, the season of the time
 when, and the situation of the place
 where, doubtless were extremely ap-
 posite and suitable.

One morning, after walking some
 time as usual in this sequestered situ-
 ation, where she could fully enjoy
 her thoughts without interruption,—
 she met young Osborne, who appeared
 to her more like a spectre than an
 animated being in human shape.—

He

He apologized for his intrusion upon her contemplative walk, but begged her to join him in another walk of the garden.—Such was his appearance, and the plaintive manner of his request, that if her heart had not been equally disposed to regard him, compassion must certainly have operated to induce her compliance.—He spoke not a word more, till they had reached an arbour in the further part of the garden, when he begged her to be seated, and, after placing himself by her side and gently taking hold of her hand he attempted to speak, but could not;—his spirit at that instant seemed to have quit its habitation, and he, overcome with agony and despair, sunk to the earth.—She shrieked aloud,——but was too far distant

distant from the house to be heard, so that she was reduced to the necessity of exerting her endeavours to recover him herself.—By the help of a smelling bottle which she held to his nostrils, and a plentiful application of hartshorn to his temples, he began to revive,—and the fine breeze of the morning soon contributed to the restoration of his senses;—but his peace of mind was too far gone, ever to be recovered.

When he was sufficiently restored to the use of his faculties, to make the necessary acknowledgments to her, —he begged her forgiveness for the trouble he had occasioned,—“ I should
“ have been sorry ” continued he,

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“ that

“ that you should have been distracted
 “ with the sight of my death, had it
 “ been in my power to chuse; but
 “ since the ghastly messenger has
 “ retired at present for your sake,—I
 “ fear he has only spared me to be
 “ more wretched.”—Her heart was
 upon the rack, and ready to burst with
 agony at the sight of his sufferings.
 —“ Oh! do not mention it,” ex-
 claimed she, “ would I could ease
 “ all your sufferings as easily as I
 “ have done this act, to which the
 “ common feelings of humanity would
 “ have laid a claim which could not
 “ be refused.”—“ And would you
 “ then, sweet angel, would you if you
 “ could? ” (hastily catching her words
 in a manner almost bordering upon
 frenzy.)—Yes, I believe you would
 —you

“—you are the angel of my paradise,
 “ and I have shut myself out of it
 “ for ever*.”—He clasp’d her hand,
 —he bathed it with his tears—his
 eyes overflowed in torrents,—nor were
 those of Fanny less streaming.—He
 asked her, if he might hope for her
 forgiveness,—might hope the blessing

* This observation appears very myste-
 rious, and certainly could not be under-
 stood by the fair one to whom it was spoken
 —But perhaps the nature and tendency
 of it might escape her notice at that time,
 as their minds seem to have been in too
 great an agitation to attend to those
 particular circumstances. This one might
 be naturally led to conclude, did not the
 event shew that there was too much foun-
 dation in fact for this expression. Editor.

of friendship.—Both——both,——
 she cryed—you have both,—I esteem
 you as my brother.—Oh, why not—
 he said, and was silent.—He looked
 at her for some moments, and then
 exclaimed,—Oh! my hard fate, but
 I was born to suffer.—Her grief was
 extreme, and deprived her of the power
 of utterance.—She endeavoured to
 console him, and to restore him to him-
 self;—she found that her own want
 of comfort was at least equally great.
 ——“ Dear Mr. Osborne,” said the
 terrified maid, “ why are you thus
 “ strangely agitated?—why are you
 “ so oppressed with jarring and con-
 “ tending passions?—what have I done
 “ to make you doubt of my friend-
 “ ship and my esteem?”——“ Oh!
 “ cordial to my torn, unhappy mind,”
 replied

replied the wretched youth, " am I
 " then dear?—did your heart accord
 " with the sweet sound which just
 " now reached my ears?—am I then
 " worthy of your friendship—your
 " esteem?—oh say yet why—for why,
 " —*why, when ty'd and bound to
 " hell's black gate, why ask a sight
 " of heav'n to damn me more?"—

* The wildness and distraction of these short expressions strongly indicated the state of his mind, and demonstrated his fears of trusting himself with so great an indulgence as the preceding words seemed to point out. For such mysterious conduct, (the cause of which was only known to himself,) it was impossible that Fanny should assign any foundation. Editor.

In an instant he started from his seat, as if afraid to pursue the subject farther, and in a moment vanished from her sight.—Inexplicable measure! —how vain each thought or wish to know the cause!—Returning to his room, he gave orders to his man to make his respects to his mother, and to inform her that he went out very early to pass the day.—The poor, unhappy maid, was in a state of mind not less pitiable.—No resource was left to her but to retire likewise to her room, to give vent if possible to the struggles and agonies with which she was oppressed; she threw herself hastily upon the bed in all the tortures and distraction of soul she then was afflicted with,—she wept —she prayed—but knew not what to ask

ask.—Such mysterious behaviour had rendered every surmise doubtful,—— and the most probable ideas she could entertain to account for it were alike uncertain and vague.——She thought he loved her,—his actions too well spoke the feelings of his heart to be mistaken;—how then was such conduct to be accounted for?——she well knew that he could not, and that he did not fear his mother's displeasure.—that his fortune was entirely in his own hands,—and that, supposing it had been otherwise, Mrs. Osborne was too good a parent, by opposing his inclination, to make him unhappy.—Nor did she forget this additional consideration, that she had reason to think herself so highly in his mother's esteem and regard, that

a declaration of such a nature would rather have tended to give her pleasure and satisfaction.—In this doubtful state did she spend her hours till the time of breakfast, nor was she then in the least nearer a deliverance from her anxious suspense; and as she was very unfit to appear in the parlour, a dreadful head ach was pleaded as the motive for her absence, and want of sleep was pretended as the cause of her illness.

In this situation, it is impossible to think that a person of Mrs. Osborne's goodness and sensibility could be happy.—She had minutely attended to the behaviour of all, and thought there was something very strange and unaccountable

able in it.—It was therefore out of her power to form any satisfactory opinion upon it.—Her heart most ardently wished to see Fanny her daughter;—she also thought that the heart of Fanny was far from being indifferently affected towards Mr. Osborne;—and she was not insensible that her son's behaviour in many respects, though mysterious in others, strongly indicated a more than common regard towards her.—How then was this strange perplexity to be accounted for?—Often would she say to herself,——surely they cannot see any thing in me to prevent their coming to an explanation; I have not intentionally done any thing to shew the least dissatisfaction or such a measure, or aversion from such a prospect

—they have therefore no cause on my account to be fearful or unhappy.—Such was the situation of this once happy family.

To return to Mr. Osborne, Fanny did not think that he was gone out, as had been represented, though his mother did.—Several times she stole to the door of his room, as if apprehensive that something tragical might have happened.—Sometimes she could hear him groan, as if tortured with the most racking pains,——then would he start and rave, as if he had been in the very height of a frenzy; ——in a short time after, when the rage of his distraction had a little abated, he would throw himself into
his

his chair and there sit still and motionless for hours, as if he had been sunk into a settled and confirmed melancholy. —From such a scene of despair and of horror, though only an occasional witness of it, Fanny found it necessary to retire as early as possible; but she neither had power or inclination to sleep, and the only business of the night was to think and be wretched.

After a day spent in so very afflicting and alarming a manner, and a night no less productive of scenes of distress which gave cause for terrible apprehensions,——the next morning found him in a high fever, and frequently delirious.——It was necessary to acquaint Mrs. Osborne with his

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condition

condition; who was almost distracted for fear of fatal consequences. She knew not what to think,—reflection's power had then its office fled, and stood aghast unable what to judge or what to conclude.—She sat by him the whole day, carefully watching every change which his affliction produced, and sedulously attending to every symptom which nature might supply to check the dreadful malady—Fanny too attended the lov'd Mrs. Osborne, to keep her company; nor was he left one instant,—Unhappy maid!—she, though unobserved, was not the least sufferer in this distressed family; her heart was torn by agonies inexpressible, to see him thus rent and harassed with grief, of which she knew herself to be the cause without

out knowing the particular reason of this awful calamity.

In this manner was he confined for more than three weeks, one day presenting perhaps a dawn of hope, and the next filling the unhappy family with nothing but the prospect of death.—But it was remarkable that he never mentioned the name of Fanny, before his mother, even when he was in the most delirious moments, and in a state of distraction verging upon madness.—He had the precaution to conceal what he knew might soon, if known, be terminated in a manner which, had there been no hidden cause, would soon have revived and restored him.

It

It happened one morning, when the physicians were retiring, that Mrs Osborne went down with them to consult them seriously upon their opinions about the life of a son whom she so highly valued. He had now been in this state more than three weeks. —Fanny stayed behind, as it was thought unadvisable for him to be left alone; when, after desiring her to come near to him, he raised himself from his pillow, with some degree of emotion, and snatching her hand, thus hastily exclaimed,—“ tell me, “ —tell me, sole arbitress of my fate “ whether I am to die, or live,—say “ if I am dear to you, and if you “ do or can love me.—I am perfectly “ resigned, and willing to die, if you “ desire it,—I have not a single wish “ for

" for my own sake to continue longer—
 " here, unless that wish will con-
 " tribute to your happiness;—but,
 " my mother,——I see very plainly
 " that her life depends on mine,—
 " say then, will you love both,——
 " will you preserve her life as well
 " as mine,—speak I beseech you, and
 " take me off the rack, for the life or
 " death of both entirely hangs upon
 " your determination,"——The hurry
 and precipitation with which he spoke,
 and the wildness and horror which
 spread in his countenance while he
 was speaking—It staggered and affright-
 ed her, and she was convinced of the
 necessity of a speedy reply.—" I will,
 " I will," she cried, with the greatest
 eagerness.—" I will if in my power
 ' make all happy."——Then, with a
 wild

wild mixture of joy and agony, which indicated the state of his feelings, as if he was still doubtful whether he should believe what he wished to hear, he said—"will your heart consent,—will you be mine in soul,—will you,"—she was going to reply, but he continued his speech,—"will you make me happy,—will you save the life of my mother who adores you."—"And is therefore," she replied, "too good to deny you any thing.—Why then is it to be kept a secret?"—"—why not ask her approbation and concurrence?—I will if in my power make all happy.—She comes—why do not you speak to her?—First strike me dead," said he quickly,—"for there is such a
 " reason.

" reason, if you knew it, that I dare
 " not speak to her—but I can die—
 " Fanny wishes it, and I am happy in
 " submitting to my fate.—Yet my
 " poor mother."—at that instant she
 entered, and all was silent.

Mrs. Osborne, by her continual
 attention to her son, and the anxiety
 she laboured under for his recovery,
 was strangely altered in her person,
 and was almost as great a spectre as
 as himself.—She was indeed worn to
 a skeleton, and exclusive of this con-
 sideration, her health was otherwise
 very sensibly affected.—Her illness ex-
 tended to Fanny, who was visibly con-
 cerned at this change of health in
 the good Mrs. Osborne;—and with
 the

the part she took in her son's malady, was almost too much for nature to support.

She looked around, and saw three people almost at the brink of the grave,—and yet she was not able to assign any reason.—Mr. Osborne apparently grew much worse, and in the evening was entirely given over by his physicians, who found him in such a state that they would not ensure his life till the next morning.—Fanny heard this intelligence with distraction,—the messenger of her own death would have been far more welcome to her.—She saw the scythe which cropt the blade would soon strike at the root, and was unable to
support

support the shock;—and she retired to her room, in a state little better than that of the youth, at whose expected loss she was so deeply moved. —The good Mrs. Osborne insisted upon her going to her apartment, as she saw that she was too ill to continue there;—she would watch by him herself, she said, and the flame of life in each should at once leave its dwelling,—they would die together. —Fanny was afraid to reason, and retired in agonies;—all the night she reflected on his strange story, and knew not what to fix upon.—At last, after wearing out the soul with reflection, she found a short repose, yet waked to the same terror and distress she had left.—She went to his room;—he was silent, and almost speechless

speechless. His mother had been so excessively ill,——that she had been conveyed away, while in a fainting fit, without her knowledge, to her bed.—God of mercy, exclaimed she, what a scene!—I will,——I will, if possible, restore them both to life and health;—such a marriage cannot be a disgrace,——and if proves unhappy, I will willingly bear it to restore peace to a family, from which I have been the unhappy means of banishing it.

No sooner had Fanny come to this resolution, than she recovered her spirits in a very unexpected manner;——she even grew well at the thought, and forgot her own affliction in the determined endeavour to restore

restore those who were more distressed.

—As soon as she had sent away the nurse,—she trembling took his hand, and feelingly asked him how he did ; —he attempted to reply, but his speech was very inarticulate, and he shook his head.—She burst into a flood of tears, and he seemed deeply affected at the sight.—He feebly said, though scarcely to be understood,—I shall die happy, were it not my mother,—my poor mother—He could not say more—a fainting overcame him, and her heart could now contain itself no longer,—I will—I will,—she cried,—I will consent to be your wife,———when, and how you please, only endeavour to keep yourself as calm as possible, and to look forward with hopes of life——She spoke

spoke with pathetic tone of voice, as if she wished to express the very inmost feelings of her heart,---and thus sufficiently awoke his senses to distinguish her words;---but he shook his head, as if he thereby meant to answer, that it was now too late,---She again repeated the very same expression, and begged of him not to doubt the truth of what she said; that, as she was desirous of and hoped for mercy in the world to come, her promises should be held as sacred.---At this declaration his eyes seemed to brighten up a little,---but nature was too much exhausted to continue, a dying languor soon again seemed to overshadow them.

In this enfeebled and desparing situation

situation did Mr. Osborne continue all that day, and every moment nothing but the approach of death was expected.—Not the smallest glimpse of hope could be entertained;—life just remained, and that was all.—But the next morning gave some small cause to hope for a favorable turn.—As Mrs. Osborne was too ill to attend upon her son, therefore Fanny had continued with him all night;—and perhaps the sight of her, and the promise she had made him, joined together, had such an effect upon his heart, as to hasten the return of his far departed health.—His mother, whose life was suspended on his, recovered also,—and the prospect in this deplorable family began to clear up, and promise a returning

returning day of health and happiness.—In a few weeks all was well, and health again restores its beautiful form.——And as they were now happy, let me leave them in the possession of that happiness, which is not often the lot of humanity, and give my pen a little respite.

Adieu,

my dear Louisa,

Your's as ever,

MARIA BELLMOUR.

In

P. S. In the story of my sister, you will perceive that I forget my own misfortunes, and would, my Louisa, that I could for ever bury them.—With the morning I will resume my pen; as it is too late to think of proceeding to night.

L E T T E R III.

Mrs. BELLMOUR to Miss COLVILLE.

My dear Louisa,

THAT the farther prosecution of the subject of my late letters has been interrupted for a few days, I hope you will easily forgive.—My promise, therefore, of resuming my pen the next morning must be understood as to my intention rather than my act.—An accident which, on some future occasion, I may inform you of, but which had better
be

be suppressed at present, has been the cause of my hindrance.

I observed to you, at the conclusion of my last, that, having restored the family to happiness, a fit opportunity offered to stop.—You will readily imagine that young Osborne, as soon as his health was tolerably restored, did not lose much time before he claimed the promise he had obtained from Fanny.—Accordingly one morning,—having procured a Licence, a Clergyman at the same time being in readiness,—the poor, lovely unfortunate maid, resigned her hand and her heart for ever.—His own man and a young girl which lived in the house, and was the attendant of

Fanny, were all the persons present. —They could each confide in their respective domestics, and therefore a discovery of their marriage was no way to be apprehended, until circumstances should render it necessary. —They were happy, —and time rolled on unperceived, and unconscious of the agony with which it was loaded. —Many, many months did thus roll away—in appearance blessed beyond the reach of woe, —though a gloomy horror would often speak from his eye, as expressive of something in his mind not altogether satisfactory, which she very prudently seemed not to observe. —At length however she found that her situation was such as would necessarily reveal her marriage, —however she might endeavour,

to

to conceal it;—and pleading this as a sufficient reason for divulging that which had hitherto been a secret, he soon quieted her thoughts by saying that she need only pretend illness, and that in consequence her dress would not be observed.—By this means, he said, she might pass a long time without discovery,—and, as it was not yet advisable to declare their marriage, he would remove her, when her condition prevented farther secrecy, to the house of a friend,—where she would meet with every thing happy and convenient.—She was thoroughly convinced that he loved her more than his own soul, and this made his reasons appear of more consequence in her mind for continuing their marriage secret,—

but still her situation was a very unhappy one.—To be torn from every thing she held dear, and separated from those she loved, to be placed with strangers,——was a reflection which required all her fortitude to bear up against;—but though her heart ached, she acquiesced in silence, —her heart, though it suffered, was conscious of no crime, and her innocence, during her preparation for departure supported her spirits.

The time at length arrived, when concealment was no longer possible, and every attempt must have been fool-hardiness.—He caused a letter to be written, as from Mrs. Rivers, in treating her by every sacred and religious

ligious obligation, to return to the castle, or she would never see her more, and that unless she saw her, she could not possibly die in peace.—It was natural to suppose that this would easily be believed by Mrs. Osborne, and that Fanny would be glad of such an opportunity as this afforded to leave her present situation, especially as he would not himself avow or permit her to declare their marriage. It is enough to say that it answered the proposed end.—Her brother was then in the country with a young gentleman in the neighbourhood, an acquaintance with whom he had some time formed;—it therefore became necessary that Mr. Osborne should attend her on the journey.—He did so, and all was agreeably settled.

Young Osborne had placed Fanny at no great distance from his mother's house, that he might the more frequently indulge himself with her company and conversation.—His soul knew no joy when he was divided from her,——and in the moments of her illness he suffered agonies that fully demonstrated the ardency of his affection, and the anxious concern he took in her welfare;——every hour was filled with doubt and perplexity, till at length he had intelligence that all was well.—She then saw herself the mother of a charming boy,——which was blessed with every feature of his father.—After the necessary time of absence, she placed her son with a woman on whom she could depend, and returned again

to Mrs. Osborne.—Again she was received with joy, and happiness once more seemed to be the guest of the peaceful dwelling.—But happiness is a guest, my Louisa, that seldom endures without her dark and unfavour'd sister, grief;—like a restless and uneasy visitor, she will endeavour by every means possible to corrupt her, and at length will oppress and drive her from her habitation.—Her brother likewise returned soon after, and some few weeks roll'd away again in bliss, and every thing seem to wear the face of pleasure and felicity.

In this tranquil state was Fanny one morning sitting alone with Mrs. Osborne, when a carriage stopped at

the door.—Soon afterwards a young lady entered, who had alighted from the carriage, and was introduced by a servant,—who immediately enquired for Mrs. Osborne.—She seemed to be in a very ill state of health, and had in her hands a child about two years old.—As soon as she understood that Mrs. Osborne was in the room, she apologized in a very obliging and condescending manner for her intrusion, and informed her that she should be happy to speak with her alone.—Mrs. Osborne replied, there was no person there who might not hear any thing that was said to her.—Upon this declaration the unexpected visitor, falling on her knees and exciting the compassion of this good lady by a too natural and unaffected story,
—informed

—informed her that the person then before her was no other than her daughter-in-law, the wife of Mr. Osborne,—and that his long neglect of her had compelled her to take this way of introducing herself to the notice of his relations, as the only method in her power to do herself justice.—She could say no more—a loud shriek from Fanny struck every one dumb with horror and amazement, and the poor deluded victim fell lifeless to the earth.—Her brother had heard the noise from the study, and returned immediately to the parlour to enquire the cause;—the shriek of his sister had almost petrified him, and at his approach, he was struck with astonishment.—His unhappy sister, half raving,—

breathed in a low but silent voice,
 —I am his, wife—pardon me, my
 mother, I am his wife—Oh! what
 a state of agony is mine!—then
 turning to the stranger,——and are
 you——but why do I doubt?——
 why need I ask—that child—his
 features—she fell lifeless to the earth
 ——her brother left the room in a
 fit of revenge, of insulted honor,—
 he fought—he met Mr. Osborne,—
 they fought, and both fell.——The
 news, for unwelcome news seldom
 needs a messenger.—the news instant-
 ly arrived—Mrs. Osborn's reason for-
 sook her,——and Fanny, gathering
 courage from despair, bid them fetch
 her child.—The carriage accordingly
 was ordered, and she hastened away
 with all imaginable speed.—She ar-
 rived

rived—can I say, alive,—no, only alive to horror and distraction.—Mrs. Rivers—the good Mrs. Rivers, whose fore-bodings on their departure were but too justly founded,—received her at the door of her carriage, to whom she gave the child.—Take care of him, exclaimed she, frantic, wild, and hardly intelligible,—take care of him for the sake of his unhappy, unfortunate mother, and she instantly flew by her to her chamber.—Mrs. Rivers quickly followed her, when she had disposed of the pretty boy, and all trembling and astonished asked, where was her brother,—with my father and my mother, answered she, in the bosom of their God.—Recollection now began to crowd upon her heart, and she fell to the earth.—

Mrs.

Mrs. Rivers raised her up, and she recovered again,—yet do not, she cried, do not disturb me,—let me rest here:—thanks to my God, that will so soon release me.—But oh! by that eternal power,—to whose dread throne my trembling soul is flying,——and before whom we all shall soon appear,——by that great power she cried, I charge you with my dying breath never to let my infant's birth be known but to my sister.—He, alas! has no inheritance,——I am no legal wife, and my own fortune is not in my power,—therefore to her and her alone reveal the tale of woe, and say that with my dying breath this last request of them I had to make,—that they would love him, succour
and

and protect him,—say farther, that my soul would in a future state be sunk with grief should they relate the story of my shame.—This last request of my departing soul, I beg you'll keep,—beg you, when time has made my sister's mind susceptible of pity, will tell to her the story of his birth, and that she will my child receive with joy,—say 'tis the child of * * * * * But here her strength and her voice failed her,—she groan'd and she expired.

Such was the last end of the beautiful, but unhappy mother of my Charles.—I must end at once, for my heart bleeds with the recollection of what the sweet soul suffered.—

And

And for her dear sake, while I have either life, or sense to know I have it, he shall be dear to me, —he shall be protected.

One request I have to make, my Louisa, is, that you keep sacred, as you would the dying request of one you most esteemed and regarded, the story with which I have now entrusted you.—As I am uncertain what may happen, for that reason if any thing should befall me to occasion my death at an early period of life,——this secret, which is the only and sole secret of my soul, may rest safely lock'd in your breast, and when a convenient time shall come, he himself may be acquainted with his birth

birth.—I cannot tell how it is, but I find my self as it were labouring under a load, from which my heart cannot deliver itself.—You will excuse my resuming my own concerns at present, as I am already too full of the melancholy tale I have been reciting to write more.

I am,

my dear Louisa,

Your's as ever,

MARIA BELLMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

GEORGE VILLARS, *Esq*; to COLONEL
BELLMOUR.

Dear Bellmour,

YOUR endeavouring to conceal the anguish of your heart, does but serve to hide the poison that feeds upon your life.—You say that you *exert every endeavour to
compose

* It is evident from this expression that some letters are here wanting, as no such

compose your bosom, and that you do not disturb any body with your sorrows.—Mrs. Bellmour is a stranger to your suspicions, as well as she is unacquainted with the cause of your unhappiness.—To your suspicions, she well may be a stranger;—the innocent heart can never suspect, can never entertain the idea of guilt.—It is conscience which alone can

such letter appears, to which an answer has not before been given. Besides from the nature of the relapse here alluded to, it is scarcely to be conceived that it could have been the work of a very short time, which would be inconsistent with the character under which we were led to view him in the first part of this correspondence. Editor.

raile

raise so unwelcome a demon,—but do not my friend, I conjure and intreat you, be so unreasonable to give them the least countenance.—I am truly sorry to see you acting so much below the character of the man you formerly was.—Let me hear from you, and that you are once more restored to the use of your primitive knowledge and judgment.

I am,

my dear friend,

Your's as ever.

G. VILLARS.

LETTER.

LETTER V.

COLONEL BELLMOUR *to* GEORGE
VILLARS, *E/q*;

I Know not how it is, my dear friend that your letters have such an effect upon my mind, but you will believe me when I assure you that they operate more strongly than the most potent charm.—How happy is it to have such a friend, !—a friend, who does not feed the malady by administering palliatives,
but

but, like a skilful physician, strikes at the root of the disease which preys upon the vitals, and directs his utmost skill and ability to take away the cause.

I wish your affairs would permit you to come to Moreton Abbey, where your presence would quickly restore happiness to the formerly gay mansion;—the pleasures of life would soon be felt and enjoyed by its inhabitants, and scenes of delight and ecstacy would once more surround the peaceful dwelling.

It is enough that I have hinted my
wishes

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the
haste

wishes;—Villars will not wait for a more pressing invitation, if within the power of his accomplishing to hasten to his anxiously expecting

BELLMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

GEORGE VILLARS, *Esq*; to COLONEL
BELLMOUR.

My dear Friend,

TH E impossibility of seeing
Moreton Abbey at present will
plead my excuse.—You know the
critical situation of my affairs, and
that nothing but the most minute and
personal attention, can counter-act the
designs of those who wish to wrest
from me so considerable a part of my
patrimony.—My friend I am certain
will

will feel for my situation, and this sensation will fully satisfy him, that nothing but necessity could have deprived me of the pleasure I have ever enjoyed in his enlivening conversation.—Bellmour is sufficiently acquainted with the character and disposition of those, with whom it is his friends misfortune to be concerned in this disagreeable business.

But you will allow me to demonstrate my affection for you by letters.—Nothing shall deprive me, except inability and want of health, of the pleasure of an epistolary correspondence;—and those, I hope, will not interrupt the only means of speaking the genuine feelings of the heart.—

VOL. II

D

What

What a happiness is it to be able to communicate our thoughts, when absent, and to convey those thoughts to the remotest parts!—How thankful ought we to be for so refine a blessing!—how grateful for so noble an improvement of our faculties—for the inestimable invention of writing.

You will pardon my freedom in repeating the advice I have already ventured to give you.—Your letters encourages me to continue this office, as the best proof of my attachment to your welfare and happiness. —Think then that Mrs. Bellmour is all that nature can produce in woman;—think that her anxiety,—that

her

her pensiveness is solely occasioned by your change of behaviour;—think that your reservedness is the entire cause of that gloom and melancholy, which has overspread her formerly blooming countenance, and necessarily gives a tincture to her actions.

I will not dwell on the disagreeable subject; but I must nevertheless consider it as a duty which friendship demands, to endeavour by every means possible to draw you from that labyrinth of confusion and disquiet, in which you are at present involved.—The claim of disinterested, —of sincere and unaffected concern for you, requires this from me.—In my next, I shall point out some

D 2

other

(80)

other considerations, which may be
of use to divert your attention in-
to a more agreeable channel; in the
mean time, I am,

my dear friend,

Your's as ever,

G. VILLARS.

LETTER

L E T T E R VII.

COLONEL BELLMOUR to GEORGE
VILLARS, *Esq*;

TEN thousand thanks to my
dear friend for his pointed,
but seasonable observations.—Every
letter more and more convinces me
that I ought not to harbour a dis-
agreeable thought of any kind, or
upon any subject without consulting
Villars.—Alas! till now I must
freely acknowledge the blessings of
D 3 friendship

friendship were unknown to me;—all that I have hitherto experienced deserves no better appellation than dreams, when compared with such generous instances of it.——When sincerity and freedom leads men to attempt the undeceiving a friend of mistakes and errors in his own conduct, at the hazard of occasioning a dissolution of such friendship,—the motive must be of the most exalted kind,—Villars has boldly undertaken this task, which convinces me in the fullest degree how much advantage we may reap from it.

I begin already to see the force of your suggestions with respect to Mrs. Bellmour.—You are right, my friend;

friend;—her griefs have been occasioned by my untoward conduct.—Gracious heav'n!—how could I be permitted to survive the wrongs I have done to this amiable woman?—why was I not cut off in midst of my impiety, and wholly extirpated at once as unworthy of life;—why was I suffered to entertain suspicions so injurious to the fairest pattern of her sex?—But *Providence is merciful to those whose errors are produced from the head and not

* Mr. Bellmour has in this place, by a very common figure of speech, put the attribute of Providence for the Deity himself. Editor.

from the heart,——who mistake not from design and intention, but from improper judgment.——Here then is my hope,——my consolation;——that what I have been guilty of, as it was done unwittingly, so I have to trust it will not be severely required of me.

The regret of your absence from me, though very great, is what must necessarily be submitted to.—Such is the pressing urgency of your business, that I should not deserve the name of a friend should I persist in continuing to importune your coming hither at present;——we will therefore wait with patience till that
happy.

happy time shall come,—and that it
may be soon, with a pleasing ter-
mination of your troublesome affair,
is the earnest wish of,

my dear friend,

Your's most affectionately,

BELLMOUR.

LETTER VIII.

Miss COLVILLE to Mrs. BELLMOUR:

Oh! my dear friend,

HOW did my heart sympathize with your's at the conclusion of the affecting history of the mother of your Charles.—Alas! the feelings of my mind were too exquisite to be recited.—I cannot do justice to them; they will be much better conceived than described.—Poor Charles!—his story has interested me more than ever in his favor;

vor; and I perceive the tender emotions of compassion stealing through my whole frame at the recollection.

The commiserating heart is always most sensibly affected with the relation of misfortunes:—It enters into all the exquisite sensations of distress and anguish; and is insensibly led to consider it as a duty to share in the miseries of the afflicted.—My dear Maria will therefore easily account for the reflection I have made respecting poor Stanley, as she calls him;—her feelings will need nothing more to excite them to a pitch of perfect unison, with those of her friend.

But whilst the history of this unfortunate youth, and his still more unfortunate parent have been recording, —your own history has been wholly neglected.—I am anxious to know whether Mr. Bellmour's conduct has of late been more agreeable,—or if you have yet discovered any leading circumstance in his actions, that may serve as a clue to lead to the cause.

There may perhaps be some foundation of a more distant nature, which to you may be still unknown,——and yet I could not perceive any ground for this conjecture.—I am, after making every probable supposition, still divided in opinion.—Sometimes I suspect that he is d_e-
ficious

fious of knowing some particulars
 about Charles, and that this ignorance
 of his birth and consanguinity preys
 upon his spirits;—that the delicacy
 of his mind, and the uncertainty of
 the result, prevents his requesting the
 favor of that information he is so
 anxious for.—But I wish at present
 to indulge myself with the hope
 that your next will give me a more
 pleasing account of the state of your
 feelings;—and yet if this should
 prove to be the occasion of his change
 of conduct, as the cause must still
 remain, I see not how I can flatter
 myself with so favorable a prospect,
 ———The thought therefore returns
 upon me with all its force, and I
 am obliged to conclude that the
 secret of this history can only be
 the

the cause of all this unhappiness.—
At all events, therefore it must be
told ;——the peace and felicity of
your future life seem to turn upon
this hinge, Adieu,

my dear friend,

Your's very affectionately,

LOUISA COLVILLE.

LETTER

L E T T E R IX.

Mrs. BELLMOUR to Miss COLVILLE.

Oh! my dear Louisa,

WHAT an assemblage of ideas have you drawn together in my mind, and with what confusion do they appear!—It seems to me like a chaos of atoms, out of which I have heard some learned gentlemen assert, an ancient philosopher supposed the world was collected by mere chance and accident into its present form.—Could any precise determination

nation be made of this jumble of conjectures and wandering thoughts, which seem to jostle each other for the foremost rank,——perhaps it might afford some consolation and respite to the present confused state of my mind.——But I fear this is a task which very much exceeds my utmost ability, and that philosopher, though so happy in creating worlds, would probably find more difficulty, was he living, to compose the jarring contentions in my breast, than he did to account for the world's formation.

Mr. Bellmour has lately had a letter from Mr. Villars;—its contents I am a stranger to, but he seems to
be

be more contented and satisfied than he has been for some months past. —I wonder whether Mr. Villars is acquainted with the circumstances which have occasioned this long continued gloom;—if he is, I begin to entertain the greatest hopes from that quarter, as this valuable friend has the fullest influence over him.——I am somewhat surprized he has not again been with us;—it is unusual for two such friends to be absent so long from each other, especially as he is unmarried, and therefore not *necessarily

* The fair writer was ignorant of the cause of Mr. Villars's absence, and, on that supposition, her reflections appear

very

cessarily so much wanted at home.—When he comes, I must also beg for the favor of your company, which your long continued friendship will not deny me;—you will soon be acquainted with each other, as Villars is of an open generous temper, with whom there is no need of ceremony as a prelude to intimacy.—Blessed with two such friends, perhaps something may be devised to clear away the

very natural and pertinent. To the reader who has been acquainted already with the cause of that absence, this observation might perhaps have been considered as misplaced, and therefore the Editor thought that some remark ought to be subjoined, to obviate any misapprehension of the writer's meaning.

mist

mist which at present obscures our sight, and interrupts our felicity;— and by this means the mystery of all this uneasiness may be unravelled.

But my Louisa, the history of my Charles must yet remain a secret.— I cannot yet reconcile myself to disclose this scene of unhappiness and disquiet; the dying request of my sister, and the extreme delicacy of the case forbids me at present from embracing that measure, till other means have failed.

I am certain your dear mother will excuse you for a short time, as I will give you the earliest intelligence

gence of Mr. Villars's arrival.—You have only to plead it as a matter of importance, and no farther reasons will be desired, especially as you will return after a few days.——Prepare yourself therefore to come at a moment's notice, as this friend cannot, I should suppose, long defer paying Mr. Bellmour a visit. I am,

my dear Louisa,

Your's as ever,

MARIA BELLMOUR.

LETTER

L E T T E R X.

Miss COLVILLE to Mrs. BELLMOUR.

W H Y, my dear Mrs. Bellmour
 —why do you so strongly
 oppose communicating the intelligence
 which seems to be necessary to re-
 store content and satisfaction to the
 mind of your Bellmour?——why
 should you press the necessity of
 keeping a secret, when the happiest
 effects may be produced from its
 declaration,——and no evil conse-
 quences

quences can ensue from it, comparable to those you at present sustain?

Do you suppose that [your sister, had she foreseen the dangerous tendency of too strict an attachment to this dying request, would ever have thought it expedient to make such a request?—Do you also consider that the violence of her distress was such as to burst nature's cords asunder, and put a speedy period to her existence?—and that this request was made in that distracted state of mind,——when the lamp of reason was extinguished, and the last phial of nature's balsom was running out apace?—But I will not renew your griefs, by pushing it farther;—the circumstances

circumstances of your situation, in my opinion, fully justify the taking of such a measure.

I will not say whether, as you expect Mr. Villars so soon, it may be necessary to embrace this step immediately.—In that case, you must certainly be the best judge, if you will but suffer your reason to resume her station.—If, as you suppose, he is acquainted with the state of Mr. Bellmour's mind, and the occasion of his solitary and disconsolate behaviour,—a little time perhaps may be better employed in observing accidental occurrences, than in hastily rushing upon a measure, which once taken, can never be recalled.—Upon
this

this supposition only, remember, I join you in sentiment.—Still I reserve the privilege of friendship, and shall not fail to press the necessity of disclosing the secret, which, I believe, will be found to occasion this gloom.

My honored mother, to whom your request has been generally communicated, gives me leave to hold myself in readiness for your summons.—To assure you of my best efforts for accomplishing so desirable an event, as that of restoring happiness to you and Mr. Bellmour, is wholly unnecessary;—you will anticipate my thoughts, and therefore it is needless to trouble you with them in writing.—I have the greatest hopes of success

cess from this expected visit of Mr. Villars;—I wish it may be soon for your sake, which will also afford me an early opportunity of testifying once more personally how much I am,

my dear Maria's

most affectionate friend,

LOUISA COLVILLE.

LETTER XI.

GEORGE VILLARS, *Esq*; t COLONEL
BELLMOUR.

My dear Bellmour,

WAS I to tell you with what pleasure I perused your last letter, you would scarcely believe it possible;—even the attempt to describe my sensations would appear to you as exaggerated.—I will therefore content myself with simply assuring you that, notwithstanding some additional difficulties which have lately been

been thrown in the way of my own affairs, my spirits were exalted to such a pitch of delight as I had never before experienced.

Now do I more than ever regret that my affairs confine me to this spot, where I am deprived of the happiness of your conversation.—I now see more strongly than before that my presence would dissipate every remaining doubt, and dispel every straggling cloud of melancholy.—How unfortunate!—that this disagreeable business should happen just at a time when my friends have the utmost need of my assistance,—that, having the means and the power of doing good, and restoring happiness to a

worthy family, the opportunity should be so perversely denied me.—Surely fortune has shewed herself unusually severe, to chuse such a time as this to oppose me, as if she could not have been satisfied with interrupting me in my own pleasures or depriving me of my own amusements, but she must even present an untoward aspect when the peace and felicity of my friends are concerned.—I am not resolved whether I ought to forgive the wanton baggage.

As you once more begin to see your error, let me conjure you to persevere in the good resolution you have already half formed, and to perfect that good work which you have
so

so happily entered upon.—This is the task which is set before you,—and which you must steadily pursue as the road to contentment;—this only can restore you to that state of mind, from which you have unfortunately slid, and to which you must return as speedily as possible.—Let no cause for disquiet rest in your breast;—you are in possession of happiness as complete as any mortal can enjoy,—it is surely then your own fault if you do not enjoy it.—A man who will not be happy, when the world has opened to him all its stores, deserves to be miserable.—What is there in life that you can even wish for?—have you not a wife, the most amiable in her manners, and the most sensible in her conver-

sation,—beautiful, lovely, and endearing, and all that nature could form to make you happy?—Have you not a fortune, fully adequate to all your wants and necessities,—a fortune which not only furnishes every convenience, but enables you to protect and support the orphan and the fatherless, to succour the widow, and to relieve the distresses and hardships of the poor?—are you not blessed with health, and every thing that can contribute to the enjoyment of life, —unless by your own fault you are determined to throw it away as of no value, and wantonly and ungratefully to cast back the favors of providence as not worth your acceptance?

I wish only to present you with a mirror, wherein to see that happiness and pleasure which are within your reach.—Extend your hand then to accept of those gifts which have been thus liberally heaped upon you:—Make yourself sensible of the value and importance of those bountiful kindnesses which you have received.—You must and I trust you will open your eyes to perceive the means of felicity which you enjoy. I am,

as ever,

my dear friend, Your's,

G. VILLARS.

LETTER XII.

COLONEL BELLMOUR *to* GEORGE
VILLARS, *Esq*;

My dear friend,

I Perceive by the nature and tendency of your pressing arguments, that you are determined to restore me to that rank in the scale of creation, which I was destined to hold.—Your reasons are irresistible;—I must, and I will act like myself.—I will convince Mrs. Bellmour of the happy change, by gradual advances to that
state

state from which I have so long wandered;—yes,—she also shall partake of the pleasures of such a transformation.—I have wrong'd,—I have injur'd her;———and she has been affected by my untoward conduct to such a degree as visibly to have impaired her health,—and yet I could not see it till you had the fortitude to pluck the veil from my eyes.—The story of this Charles——this orphan——still indeed hangs upon my spirits;——but I will endeavour to shake off that consideration.—Why should I distress myself with such a thought?—he has been maintained by the family from his infancy,——he is naturally attached to them from gratitude,—and if, 'as they represent, he is the cousin of my Maria, must be

so from affinity.—Well,—I will endeavour to convince myself of the truth of this,—and indeed I see no reason why I should doubt it;—but I know not what demon has been hitherto perplexing me with unfavorable surmises, which from henceforth I am resolved to discard.—From this time he shall be treated with more tenderness and affection,—and, as he is of an age to chuse some profession, if he approves of any particular line of life, I will exert my utmost endeavour to promote him.—Perhaps he may begin to feel his dependance, and may consider his situation in a different point of view to what he thought it before my coming to Moreton Abbey, and this may account for that pensive turn I have for some time

time observed in him.—Perhaps he may have remarked my late conduct, the thoughts of which may have affected his spirits,—especially as his sensibility may naturally induce him to consider himself as the cause.—But I must endeavour to undeceive him in both these particulars,—yet so as to manage it with the utmost delicacy ;—his feelings are exquisitely fine, and require to be treated with the utmost tenderness.—Had your affairs permitted you to come to Moreton Abbey, that difficulty would have been considerably lessened ; till such happy opportunity offers, we must wait for occurring circumstances to promote and set forward so desirable an end.

You see with what frankness I have disclosed to you the whole cause of my unhappiness;—and, having now furnished you with a land mark, you may in future assist me with greater probability of success in those measures, which tend to my own felicity and the future peace and tranquillity of my Maria.

In this task, (so perfectly agreeable to your wishes,) I know you never can be weary.—Those exertions you have already made to restore me to myself, convince me of your unremitted attention to every thing which may contribute to my repose.

Uncertain

Uncertain as I am what steps to take at present for putting in practice those happy resolutions, I believe you will excuse my concluding this letter, having the satisfaction to be,

my dear friend,

Your ever obliged servant,

BELLMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

Mrs. BELLMOUR to Miss COLVILLE.

My dear Louisa,

WHAT the event of Mr. Bellmour's correspondence with Mr. Villars may be, or what may be the subject of it, I am unable to form any certain judgment of the one or the other.—Of late however, it has been much more frequent, which leads me to conjecture that something is in agitation of a nature more than commonly interesting.—In-

—Involved in doubt and uncertainty, I almost fear, yet anxiously wish to know whether Mr. Bellmour's melancholy and pensive state of mind may not have been the subject,—as I have often observed that he has been more chearful than usual of late after receiving a letter from his friend.

No tidings have yet been announced to give reason for Mr. Villars's wished for visit.—Perhaps his frequent letters may relate to the cause of his delaying that favor.—I have hopes that, from Mr. Bellmour's returning good humour and occasional pleasantry, the subject is propitious.—Time only can determine whether I am right;—but this
 slender

flender dawning is at least a favorable omen,—and, if it comes to nothing, may prove a temporary relief to the spirits.

But, my Louisa, this slight relief does not appease nor calm my troubled feelings;—there is still a something which presses heavy upon my mind.—The consideration that it is no more than conjecture, hangs as a dead weight upon the spirits, and prevents me from embracing that satisfaction which the certainty of its being well-founded would produce.—It affords as it were a passing gleam of joy, and all is gone.

Your tender and pathetic remon-
strance

france almost overpowered me.—Had you continued the same strain a few lines more, it would have been too much for my feeble nature to sustain.—But, feeling for my distracted state of mind, you desisted in time to admit the recovery of my spirits.——I believe they were less able to bear the shock than you imagined,—or you would not have put them so forcibly to the trial as you did.—I feel myself very indifferent, and therefore have no doubt that my Louisa will excuse this abrupt conclusion of

her affectionate friend,

MARIA BELLMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

Miss COLVILLE to Mrs. BELLMOUR.

My dear Mrs. Bellmour,

WH Y do you distress yourself with imaginary evils, when the prospects which of late have been exhibited before you are of so favorable and flattering a nature?—It is,—it must be so.—Mr. Villars's correspondence must relate to this subject;—whence that chearfulness, —whence that good humour in your Bellmour, on receiving a letter from his

his friend, but from this cause?—
 It cannot be attributed to any other
 motive;—and if something very extraordinary did not prevent him from
 coming to Moreton Abbey,——depend upon it, he would soon convince you that he has heartily espoused the cause of your happiness.

I am truly concerned for your bad
 state of health;—I perceived it in
 your writing before I read your acknowledgment of it.—The effect of
 your disturbed state of mind upon
 your spirits has at last extended to
 the affecting your health.—You must
 not indulge these gloomy ideas.—
 You must only dwell upon those
 reflections which are of a favorable
 and

and pleasing nature,—and represent your prospect of future happiness in the most amiable light.—Melancholy thoughts and pensive meditations must be wholly banished, as you value your comfort and satisfaction in life;—you must drive away every gloomy reflection, if you would wish to enjoy those scenes of felicity which are at present held out to you.—You owe it to your friends.—to yourself,—and, I add, to your Bellmour,—who, if I do not very much misconceive the tendency of what you relate, will soon again prove him worthy of you.—Rouse then from that lethargy and stupidity into which you are sinking,—and exert your faculties by accustoming them to their proper and original uses.—Perhaps

his

his returning chearfulness may proceed from a victory obtained over himself;—perhaps he may have dispelled those gloomy thoughts which have so long affected him;—perhaps he owes this to the good offices of his friend.—May not your Louisa then claim the same privilege to excite your feelings,——and call forth your reason to a sense of your situation?—that the one may come in aid of the other, and both united produce a lasting source of happiness in the mind.—What hinders that I may not assume the friendly office?——the attempt at least is such as will justify me—nor do I see what can hinder the success of such attempt if my Maria will but seriously attend to the admonitions of her friend.

I

I have the most pleasing hopes that Mr. Bellmour will have so far altered his conduct before this reaches you, that the most happy effects on your health may be visible.—The return of your health will necessarily be ensured by the return of your spirits,—and this, I am inclined to believe, you will sensibly perceive in a short time.—At present I must conclude with sincerely wishing the recovery of your health and spirits together,

my dear Maria,

Your's as ever,

LOUISA COLVILLE.

LETTER

L E T T E R X.

Mrs. BELLMOUR to Miss COLVILLE.

I Cannot say, my dear Louisa, that your letter had that happy effect on my spirits, which I am certain you intended it to have.—Every thing that you hope for in respect to Mr. Bellmour is more than fully answered;—but his expressive instances of returning condescension do not make that alteration in me which perhaps he expects, and I myself wish
to

to demonstrate.—That languor which has fixed itself on my spirits seems unwilling to resign its station.—I am, if possible, more gloomy and pensive than before;—but perhaps the revival of his affections makes the difference appear greater than it really is.—The indulgence of this hope will afford me some consolation, and probably tend to restore my mind to a better state.

The silence of Mr. Bellmour about Charles indeed perplexes me.—I am in doubt whether he has not been the innocent occasion of all this uneasiness,—I muse and ponder over every trivial act, as if it originated from some weighty and important motive;

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trial.

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ment
there
hope
purp

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motive ;—perhaps I am wrong,—few persons, and probably none would be able to stand the test of so severe a trial.

But my anxiety to discover the reason of his late melancholy insensibly draws me into such kind of meditations.—Be it so,—the intention at least is venial, if not laudable.—By giving away to this propensity, the cause of that mysterious conduct I have so lately and so much lamented may be discovered.—I will therefore indulge the thought, in hopes of converting it to a good purpose.

It is very unfortunate that when

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we

we have most occasion for the society of our friends, they should be so much engaged in their own domestic and personal concerns, as to require their whole attention.—But perhaps, for wise reasons, to us unknown, the will of the supreme has so ordered it;—and the chain of divine providence may require that our own domestic inquietude should not materially interrupt their tranquility.

The reflection is such as my situation naturally suggests,——I cannot otherwise account for this unexpected prevention of Mr. Villars's coming here, when his presence would, in our apprehension, be of such essential
service

service
Louisa
friend
to yo
add t
sure

service to us.—You perceive, my
Louisa,—that under this idea, your
friendly assistance must be confined
to your letters.—It is unnecessary to
add that I shall soon expect the plea-
sure of another letter from you,

Adieu,

my dear friend,

Your's ever affectionately,

MARIA BELLMOUR.

LETTER XVI.

GEORGE VILLARS, *Esq;* to COLONEL
BELLMOUR.

THE variegated complexion of your letter, my dear Bellmour inspired me with passions of the most opposite nature.—Surely said I to myself, can it be possible, for two such contrasted ideas to be pursued at once by the same person?—I was staggered and confounded at the question;—I knew not what to answer, or how to reconcile the jarring and

and contending reflections thence arising.

Oh! Bellmour,—what an ungenerous,—what a stinging remark!— 'Tis well that your Villars only is privy to it;—---I would not for all I am worth that Mrs. Bellmour should ever come to the knowledge of it;—her life would be the sacrifice that would be offered on this altar of unhappiness.—Is this to act like Bellmour?—Is this the formerly generous Bellmour,—who can declare that he has wrong'd,—that he has injured the fairest of all nature's creation,—and, with the same dip of his pen, close the sentence with so pungent a remark?—

“ The story of this Charles—this
 “ orphan——hangs indeed upon my
 “ spirits.”——What you immediately
 advance is nothing more than delu-
 sion,——“ I will endeavour to shake
 “ off that consideration; ”——but why
 then indulge in the piercing reflec-
 tion?——why suffer yourself to be
 carried away with the torrent of a
 disturbed fancy, and open the sluices
 of distraction and frenzy?——Is this
 to act like Bellmour?——Gracious
 heav’n!——where do you suffer your
 imaginations to roam in quest of
 matter to make you unhappy?——Is
 this the way by which Mrs. Bell-
 mour is to be convinced of your
 happy change?——Is this the way in
 which she is to partake of the pleasures
 of your transformation——You deceive
 yourself

yourself, my friend, you are now acting the part of a quack,—who patches up an old sore for the sake of present reputation, but leaves that matter behind, which, if suffered to continue, will soon rankle and break out again with greater acrimony.

You speak of furnishing me with a land-mark.—True—you have indeed presented me with one that harrows up the inmost veins of my soul.—Under the specious pretence of doing justice to Mrs. Bellmour, and in the very moment of acknowledging your error, you give a wound which pierces deeper than all you have yet inflicted. But I trust that the consequences are not perceived by you;—that for the

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 “ orphan—hangs indeed upon my
 “ spirits.”—What you immediately
 advance is nothing more than delu-
 sion,—“ I will endeavour to shake
 “ off that consideration; ”—but why
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sake of humanity, you have not adverted to the nature and tendency of these reflections.—I must and I will hope this.—I will flatter myself that the benevolent hand of charity may yet dispel the mist which obscures your eyes,—and that the free though violent hand of friendship, may pluck off the veil which intercepts your sight.

I will reserve for another letter the reflections which have occurred to me respecting young Stanley.—He always appeared to be a most agreeable, accomplished youth;—but your harsh, grating insinuations almost endear him to me.—With every claim upon your honor, your affinity, and
 —your

your compassion,—he is hurt with the sense of his dependance upon a Person, who does not seem conscious of his merits;—it is ungenerous, —it is cruel to play with his tender feelings, and torture him so causelessly with such a reserved and distant behaviour.—Fie, Bellmour,—rouse yourself to a sense of your duty and cast off those unpleasing and distracting thoughts. Adieu,

Your's most sincerely,

G. VILLARS.

LETTER XVII.

COLONEL BELLMOUR *to* GEORGE
VILLARS, *Esq*;

WHY, George, will you rend my heart, by persevering in those pungent, those striking observations?—I know that my behaviour to young Stanley has been faulty, —but why, when I have already assured you that I have commenced a reformation,——why will you still manifest a jaundiced eye to see every thing in so unfavorable a point of view

view?—Surely Villars must either have mistaken the purport of my letter, or I must indeed have unaccountably deceived myself.

Had I not known the inestimable value of your friendship, the harshness of your expressions would certainly have defeated the very purpose intended.—By creating disgust, instead of procuring attention, the respect to which the motive might have entitled them would have been converted, by improper management, into hatred and dislike.—A skilful physician considers the temper and disposition of his patient, as well as his malady,—and endeavours to discover the predominant passion of his

F 6

nature

nature, as well as the cause of his disease;—not that his disorder requires all this,——but because such attention enables the physician to reconcile his patient to the necessary course of medicine, by conveying it in a pleasing and agreeable vehicle.

Think not, my friend, that I wish you by this to discontinue your good offices;——on the contrary, I am thoroughly sensible of the value and importance of your kind, though sometimes severe admonitions.——I know they are meant in sincerity, and therefore it would be unpardonable in me to reject them.—You will, nevertheless, allow me to exercise my own judgment a little;—for that office, I
think

think, I am partly qualified, as being fully conscious of my own thoughts and designs.—I feel myself at present in that temper of mind which convinces me that my intentions are the most favorable to happiness, and conducive to the restoration of that tranquility and contentment so ardently to be wished for.

The endeavours I have made to restore Mrs. Bellmour to a state of mind, which may tend to the recovery of her health and spirits, have not yet been productive of the desired end.—But the delicacy with which I am obliged to manage this business of my returning condescension, may perhaps prevent the discovery

covery of any immediate effect.—My only hope is in perseverance, and in manifesting an intention of a gradual increase of my assiduities.—I have occasioned this languor and gloom which preys upon her spirits;—it is therefore my business to attempt the restoring her to health and happiness, as the only resource left me to atone for my crime. Adieu,

my dear friend,

Your's as ever,

BELLMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

GEORGE VILLARS, *Esq*; to COLONEL
BELLMOUR.

My dear Bellmour,

WHEN I tell you that your last letter gave me more solid satisfaction than any I have received from you a considerable time,—the assertion will gain credit with you without hesitation.—There is an appearance of reasoning in it which convinces me that your intentions of correcting your conduct have some foundation.

foundation.—Where you differ from me in opinion, it is done in a pleasing, rational, and an agreeable manner,—and you therein afford every flattering cause for hope, that your returning judgment will soon be mature enough, [to exercise its faculties without any foreign aid or assistance.

But, my dear Bellmour, do not mistake me, as if I considered the powers of your judgment sufficiently restored at present to exercise their natural and original offices.—I cannot as a friend permit you to be exposed to those dangers to which such an opinion would in your present state betray you.—Though you are no stranger.

stranger to the various forms and appearances which fiction and falsehood assume,—you are not yet sufficiently divested of those prejudices under which you have so long laboured, clearly to discern them.—Your conduct at present must be that of caution;—and to distrust your eyes, with a little allowance, may be considered in your situation as a good lesson.—At least it would be advisable to suspend your belief of every thing which has not the most evident marks of conviction.

In recommending this suspicious and wary mode of proceeding, I wish not to establish it as a maxim for the world in general.—It may suit in particular

particular ages or countries, or amongst particular people on certain occasions,——but will often fail of every good consequence in common practice;——on the contrary, it will sometimes be productive of much injury, by exciting doubts and creating unfavorable notions, where they could never have been otherwise entertained. —But you will excuse me in repeating that I think it necessary in your present case, as the best means of attaining to your former state of mind;—it may be of essential service to check and subdue every accidental and disagreeable suggestion, or erase every unfavorable and doubtful impression.

To advise your [consulting Mrs.
Bellmour's

Bellmour's health, is unnecessary ;— you begin to see the importance of that lesson yourself.—Study to make Charles's situation as agreeable as possible.—Encourage him to a friendly and sociable intimacy, by convincing him that you repose in him the highest confidence ;—there are a thousand little ways of doing this, which there can be no need for me to point out.—Endeavour to satisfy him that you wish to gratify him, in such innocent and rational amusements as may be most pleasing to him.

—Perhaps these little assiduities shewn to him may have great effect upon your Maria ;—her spirits may
revive

revive, and her gratitude be excited to attempt a return of such generous behaviour.——You must use every means to root out the cause of her increasing pensiveness;——the consequences are by every possible exertion to be guarded against and prevented.——I wish it was in my power to come to Moreton Abbey,—no pains should be spared to restore you both to health and happiness.

Why does she not press some of her female friends to make a visit?—they would not deny themselves such a pleasure, especially with so considerable an object in view as the recovery of her health.—Where is Miss Colville,—of whom I have heard

her

her speak in such flattering terms?
—now, if ever, surely, is the time
to manifest her friendship.—Tell
Mrs. Bellmour that Villars says so.
—I am,

my dear friend,

as ever,

Your's

G. VILLARS.

LETTER

L E T T E R X I X.

Miss COLVILLE to Mrs. BELLMOUR.

P E R H A P S my dear Mrs. Bellmour will excuse the freedom of my telling her, that her Louisa's sentiments by no means accord with those of her last letter. —Mr. Bellmour's returning condescension and assiduities are acknowledged, and yet she suffers herself to become the prey of melancholy and distress.——What reason can be assigned

assigned why, the cause being removed, the effect should not cease?

You must, my dear Maria,—you must rouse yourself from that pensive and languid state to which you have been for some time devoted.—To continue long in it will be inexcusable.—Though Mr. Bellmour at first occasioned it,—for what cause is still uncertain,—his present endeavours to console you, and his various attempts to manifest his reviving affection, ought to prevail with you to return those little civilities he pays you.—The conviction of his error is plain;—else why such anxious care, such earnest thoughts to please the object of his choice,
—nay

—nay more, to reconcile you to himself, what does he not attempt? —in short, you cannot in justice and equity refuse contributing all in your power to his satisfaction and happiness.

To wait for the cause of Mr. Bellmour's change of temper before you think of conforming yourself to his inclinations,—is a vain chimaera.—You will know in good time if it any way concerns you,—if when returning health shall you prepare to hear the pensive tale,——if then to hear may give content and gentle peace restore, doubt not that Bellmour will communicate whate'er you wish to know;—but if, instead

of

of this, it more concerns himself than any other,—wish not to comprehend the pangs of grief, or understand the pain of injured truth.—If he proposes any simple amusements, oppose not his inclination, however reluctantly you may comply with them;—think that it is necessary for the sake of your own peace, and for the satisfaction of your Bellmour.—If he seems to favor any simple recreations,—though you can promise to yourself no pleasure from joining in them, do it for the sake of making him happy.—Let this be the constant and invariable rule of your actions;—the recovery of your health and spirits may depend more upon such simple compliances than the most weighty and important mat-

ters.—Mr. Bellmour will perceive that it diverts at least and divides your attention ;—and this will give him hopes that, by persisting in such course, you may thereby be restored to such a state as will ensure the perfect re-establishment of your health.

Charles Stanley seems to dwell upon your mind.—A little time will discover Mr. Bellmour's thoughts upon that subject.—At present, your only object is to endeavour to compose yourself, and to hope the best.—I think some favorable circumstances will soon occur to your notice, to reconcile every doubt respecting that matter.—As the case indeed appears now, the discovery of his history

history does not seem so immediately necessary;—let that rest therefore to another occasion.—Consider your own health, and the means of reviving your own dissipated spirits,—and, in order to this, make yourself easy with respect to Charles.—Tell him that Louisa says he ought to be satisfied at present;—her reasons he may know hereafter, if he does but conform to her directions.—Tell him I wish to see him happy,——what would he have more?—but tell him that I say it is necessary to have some patience, and not give too much loose to his feelings.—I know his extreme sensibility of temper, and therefore know that the circumstances of his situation furnish him with abundant matter for the

G 2

exercise

exercise of it.—Let what I have advanced satisfy my friend;—if this does not avail, is there any thing more in the power of your Louisa to perform, which can affect so desirable an end?—But this must suffice at present to assure you how much I am,

my dear Maria,

Your's most affectionately

LOUISA COLVILLE.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

Mrs. BELLMOUR to Miss COLVILLE

My dear friend,

THAT I ought to think myself extremely fortunate in your instructive correspondence, must be acknowledged.—Your happy talent of giving the most pleasing turn to whatever you touch upon, has already had a considerable effect upon my spirits,—and I know not whether I do not feel myself revived this instant in consequence of

your last letter.—Mr. Bellmour perceived a ray of chearfulness after I had perused it, and I thought it gave him a sensible pleasure.

Whatever is necessary to dissipate and dispel the gloom and languor of the pensive and melancholy, seems to be wholly at your command.—

Whence did you procure all this knowledge?—What assistance has enabled you to grasp and comprehend so effectually and extensively the prevailing art?—You have touched the string which accords to my feelings with so much dexterity, that I am forced to acknowledge your extraordinary skill;—allow me then most sincerely to thank you for your
unusual

unusual address in the application.—

I mean not to flatter you, my Louisa, in this observation;—it shall therefore be sufficient to observe, that, whether from your remarks respecting Charles, or your reflections upon the plan of conduct recommended to me, I know not,—but that I felt a very sensible change in my whole frame.

To say then that I perceive myself better, is enough;—the simple assertion will give you a satisfaction far exceeding all the embellishments of art.—Perhaps the change may be only temporary in its nature, and partial in its effect;—but still by taking advantage of the favorable

crisis, some good may probably ensue to prepare the way for the attainment of health. —At present I feel myself in such a disposition of mind, as encourages me with the hope of reaping all the benefits it is capable of producing.

Mr. Bellmour still continues the same anxious assiduity to administer to the recovery of my health as when I wrote last. —Now and then a serious, pensive thought seems to engross his attention, —but it is commonly transient and of a short continuance. —His general conduct seems to be guided by an earnest desire for my restoration, —and every occasional instance of returning spirits gives him

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inexpressible satisfaction and happiness.

—With the most ardent affection, I
am, as ever,

my dear Louisa's

most obliged friend,

MARIA BELLMOUR.

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LETTER

LETTER XXI.

Miss COLVILLE to Mrs. BELLMOUR.

My dear Mrs. Bellmour,

FROM the nature of your favor received a few days ago I am inclined to hope that it is unnecessary at present to urge the consideration of what was advanced in my last letter.—I am happy to find that you are sensible of the justice of my remarks.—This consideration gives me abundant satisfaction;—and, to acknowledge the kindness only as
it

it is intended, is an ample recompence for the most continued thoughts and unremitted labour which can be employed for your welfare and happiness.

To say that I feel myself at a loss to account for the surprize which you seem to express, is what indeed must be asserted.—Was there any thing more than natural in my letter? —Surely, my dear Maria, the friend of your inmost counsels and most secret thoughts may account for your feelings without any extraordinary aid or assistance.—I pretend to no merit in that to which you ascribe such wonderful power.—A simple idea or two, with a few easy and natural

G 6

reflections

reflections from them, is the whole state of the matter.—In this I see no room for praise, for wonder view no cause, 'tis but what friendship prompts and duty craves,—humanity requires its usual boon;—your partial eyes may common deeds enhance, and nature's simple acts exaggerate,—but who so stops at such like obvious claims is most unworthy of the name of friend.

I was delighted beyond measure to find you correcting yourself respecting the transient pleasure you spoke of.—Had you not done it almost with the same breath, I should have lost all patience with you;—I should have exclaimed against you as unworthy

worthy of felicity,—as resolved to drive it from you, when it was even courting you to accept it.—But perhaps you suspected my catching at the expression, and supposed that I should ring it in your ears;—I will hope it and from thence draw another favorable argument for your speedy recovery to your former state. I repeat it, that happiness is now soliciting your acceptance, and you have little more to do than to extend your arms to embrace it.—To throw away the jewel, therefore, would be inexcusable, when it only needs your hand to polish it to the greatest degree of brilliancy and lustre.—Refuse not then so small a trouble;—’tis what you must undertake,—what you must accomplish,—and no other

other can effect for you.—Mr. Bellmour seems determined to perform his part of the business;—and why should you wish to deprive him of the pleasure he must receive from your completing it.

You say nothing of Charles, or of the commission with which I charged you;—I will therefore suppose that you have not fulfilled it, and could not give me any account of its effect.—Another reason might be assigned for your silence, upon a supposition that you have even mentioned it;—that sensibility of which he has so large a share,—a share so great that ev'n the most enlighten'd of our age might pose to give a just account of every

every movement which his mind may feel and trace the cause must for a time make the result obscure.—In your next, I expect you will inform me whether you mentioned it to him;—it was needless to point out to you in what manner, and therefore, if not yet executed, unnecessary to do it now. Adieu, my dear Mrs. Bellmour,

Your's as ever,

LOUISA COLVILLE.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

Mrs. BELLMOUR. to Miss COLVILLE.

WHEN my dear Miss Colville is informed that her Maria is not yet perfectly recovered from that state of languor and stupidity, into which she was lately so far sunk and degenerated,—she will wonder what can hinder the completion of so desirable and necessary a business.—For this no reason can be given, if you will not allow that the difference betwixt persons in health
and

and such as are indisposed, makes a very sensible difference in the effects upon the mind and spirits,—which are the medium or vehicle through which an impaired constitution must receive whatever is suited to restore and improve it.—To this alone the cause of my continued gloom must be assigned,—nor see I ought to which th'oppressive load of grief and sorrow can with equity and truth's fair garb be now attributed, unless the plea here offered may be heard.—I will promise you, however to make every effort for so desirable a purpose;—it perhaps will be a work of considerable time to effect it completely,—but my dear Louisa presses it as a matter of necessity, and therefore it must be attempted.

I perceive it is very advisable for me to take care how and what I write.—You keep so sharp a look out, that there is no escaping you;—you have got, (if it may be allowable to adopt the simile,) the eyes of a hawk, and seem determined to keep me on my guard.—Perhaps you think that the spirits may gather strength by such exercise,—and that this is a very prevailing means of preventing my degenerating into that former lethargic habit, which was become so alarming to you.—To doubt of the propriety, or at least the plausibility of your reasons, would be to act ungenerously;—I know your motives, and therefore ought to attribute every thing you advance to the design you had in writing it.

Upon

—Upon any other ground, I should sometimes be almost tempted to quarrel with you;—I know you will excuse this open confession,——but surely you ought to suffer me to have a little respite, lest by a continued stretch the spirits should be exhausted, and you should thereby defeat your own intention and design.

—You wish to hear something more of Charles.—He is gone upon a visit for a short time to a young gentleman, one of his college acquaintance, —a lively, agreeable, young man, whose vivacity, I hope, may have a pleasing effect upon his spirits.—To wait his return, therefore, seems more proper for the discharging your commission than to acquaint him with it by letter.—I presume you are now

satisfied

satisfied as to the occasion of my silence with respect to young Stanley. — Since his absence Mr. Bellmour has been more frequently from home, the cause of which I cannot account for ; — but his assiduities and attention, when at the Abbey, are the same as usual since the recovery of his former affability.* I am, my dear Louisa,

Your affectionate

MARIA BELLMOUR.

* As Mrs. Bellmour says nothing to her friend on the subject of Mr. Villars's assertion at the conclusion of Letter XVIII of this volume, it must be inferred from hence either that these letters are misplaced in order of time, or that Mr. Bellmour had waited for some more favorable opportunity for mentioning it, than any which had yet occurred. — Perhaps he might think it more advisable to postpone it till young Stanley should be returned from his visit, that Miss Colville might be sent for when he was at home. Editor.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

COLONEL BELLMOUR to GEORGE

VILLARS, *Esq*;

SINCE I had the pleasure of
meeting you at Preston,*—a
thousand

* It seems from the whole tenor of this
letter, that some part of the correspondence
is wanting; as this meeting was evidently by
appointment of the two friends; what is
contained in this epistle is sufficient to con-
firm this opinion, though it leaves us in
the dark as to the means and occasion of
the

thousand things have entered into my mind on the subject of our conversation.—Our time was short, but the use we made of it may be productive of the happiest effects for months and years to come;—already I begin

the meeting. But perhaps the reader may conclude, without prejudice to the history, that the letters wanting might contain little more than a proposal of such a meeting on the part of Mr. Villars, and a compliance with such proposal on the part of Mr. Bellmour. As this seems to have been occasioned by an unexpected occurrence which offered to Mr. Villars,—so it is probable that it related to the business which had so long prevented him from visiting his friend. It is therefore unnecessary to trouble the reader with them. Editor.

to feel the bliss, th'extatic pleasure
 which my fancy frames, and time,
 with fostering hand, will realize.

You so happily explained to me
 the purport and intention of your
 last letter, prior to that which com-
 municated the information of your
 coming to Preston, that I have little
 to observe upon that subject.—But a
 few things nevertheless force them-
 selves upon me.—I feel, agreeable to
 your remark, that my faculties are
 not yet fully restored to perform
 their natural and proper functions;
 —for at the same time that I per-
 ceive the necessity of a cautious con-
 duct, I am puzzled more than ever
 to discern the cases wherein it ought

or

or ought not to be applied.—My embarrassment is frequently visible to Mrs. Bellmour, and I am greatly apprehensive, occasions her some uneasiness and concern, though she endeavours to hide it from me.—Though I wish and studiously endeavour to conceal both the cause and the effect of those struggles in my mind,—that intenseness of reasoning, and probably the improper applications into which I am sometimes betrayed, too often discovers what I would most anxiously desire to keep secret.

That extraordinary concern which you have so forcibly convinced me you entertain for my happiness and the peace and contentment of Mrs.
Bellmour

Bellmour, almost surpasses belief.—
 The more I consider it, the more
 I am astonished;—and then again I
 am astonished with myself that I
 should wonder at any thing noble
 and generous, however it may excel,
 when it comes from Villars.—Oh!
 my friend,—could we but have the
 pleasure of your company and con-
 versation for one month, we should
 be the most happy beings on earth.

Your natural good sense and strong
 talents, aided by so high a degree of
 cultivation of them, would operate
 most effectually to the restoration of
 peace and tranquility in our lately
 distressed and distracted family.—But
 since you tell me that the hopes of

such a pleasure is at a greater distance than before,—to contradiction's hand we must submit, and fortune's frowns to pleasing smiles convert; —to work impossibilities no need we have, but only to secure content,—that is the charm which all our wounds must close.

Charles Stanley is not yet returned from his visit, which I told you of. —Upon that subject, therefore, I can say nothing at present.—When he is, —as I shall have much need of your directions to execute that delicate business, you may expect to hear from me the whole of what he proposes, and what I myself would wish to effect.—Mrs. Bellmour's health improves

improves but slowly;—I know not whether that pensive mood, occasioned as I have informed you by my embarrassments, may not have affected her.

I am, as ever,

Your's

BELLMOUR.

H A

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

GEORGE VILLARS, *Esq;* to COLONEL
BELLMOUR.

I AM afraid, my dear Bellmour,
that the dæmon which has so long
and so prevailingly haunted you, is
not entirely expelled from your bo-
som.—What!—after all the labour and
pains I have taken to chalk out a
path for you, and not yet to under-
stand me,—is somewhat surprizing.—
Are my expressions so intricate,—so
perplexing,—so mysterious and ambi-
guous

guous, that you cannot yet collect a rule of conduct from them?—Surely, my friend, I must either have grossly failed in my attempts to represent the ideas which had been formed in my mind, or you must have strangely misconceived my meaning.—But you know the sincerity of my intention;—if therefore, I have less clearly explained my sentiments than I wished for, I am certain of having your excuse,—and it will be my future business to correct any omission I may have been guilty of, or imperfection into which I may have unwittingly slid—I wish you would take the same liberties with me, in any thing wherewith you do not coincide in sentiments, as it is my invariable object to exercise towards you, whenever

your letters do not altogether please me.

Did I fail to alarm you on every appearance of apostasy into your former errors, I should be unworthy the name of friend.—If in my zeal a mistake should possibly be committed, —this will give you a foundation to object to my observations ;—to consider me as infallible is what I have never wished or desired —In return for the general rules which I formerly gave you, it is replied that you are puzzled and perplexed in applying them.—At the same time I strongly recommended caution which, you observe, has been productive of embarrassments that have been noticed by Mrs. Bellmour.

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But no general rules can provide for every particular circumstance;—it must be the business of prudence and discretion in the persons applying them, without which all other efforts to administer assistance must be useless.—Instead therefore of giving way to these mistaken conclusions.—abandon whatever has the slightest tendency to create the least uneasiness either to Mrs. Bellmour or yourself.—When your embarrassments are such as to become the object of notice, they are certainly extended too far, and must be laid aside;—wait for a more convenient season, when your thoughts in gloom obscure are less involv'd, and above all whatever tends to doubt or deep perplexity be sure t'avoid as something

thing baneful which your nature dreads
 —We have no need, as you observe,
 but to secure content,—and surely
 you who can describe its properties
 and perfections in such harmonic strains
 can be no stranger to its effects.

To what you mentioned with respect to Charles Stanley, I am not competent to reply.—I think there is much ambiguity in the expression, which seems to originate in a confused state of mind.—What I can observe of it, is, that you still seem to harbour and nourish the poison which has so long been flowing through your veins.—For heaven's sake, my dear Bellmour, expel the thought which seems to be the basis of all your perplexity

plexity.—He is—what is he?—or rather what is he not?—is he not the relation of your Maria,—the adopted son of the wife of your bosom,—the most amiable and the most accomplished youth which perhaps nature ever framed?—Represent to yourself the injustice, the cruelty of indulging a thought any way injurious to him; —the claims of heaven upon that bounty which it has pour'd upon you are in his favor,—and his wrongs assuredly must and will one day be redressed.—Suffer not yourself to admit a reflection to his disadvantage; —the unfortunate and premature death of his parents, for I see no reason to disbelieve the account which is given of him, by which you now enjoy what of right would in part

have belonged to him,—gives him a double claim to your attention in point of equity.—I wish not to find you again speaking of him in any disrespectful or even indifferent manner;—he merits, and is entitled to your most cordial esteem. Adieu,

Your's as ever,

G. VILLARS.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

COLONEL BELLMOUR *to* GEORGE

VILLARS, *Esq*;

W H Y, George, will you press
me to declare my *suspicious

* This seems to be the first symptom
of his returning frenzy,—Mr. Villars had
hitherto, by his unwearied assiduities, re-
frained the violent passions of his friend,
and, by his continued good offices, for some
time after proves the means of averting the
tragic effects which afterwards ensued.—
Editor.

H 6

with

with respect to Charles Stanley?—
 Could it be imagined that you had
 received a fee to plead his cause, and
 turn advocate for one of whom no-
 body knows either his parents or friends
 —you could not have expressed your-
 self with more eagerness.—’Tis too
 much,—I cannot and will not bear the
 thought of being made the dupe of a
 whole family;—and, as if this was not
 sufficient, my dearest friends must be
 made parties in the matter against me.
 —By heavens! I’ll bear it no longer.
 —I suppose too I shall soon find that
 Louisa Colville has been secured in
 his interest —Mrs. Bellmour too, there
 is no doubt, is against me;—I perceive
 it too well to be mistaken,—I am only
 the second in her esteem and affection,
 —who the first is, it is needless to de-
 clare

clare.—Under such a situation as this, can I be easy?—Of what strange materials must I be made to be sensible of all this, and tamely to submit to and acquiesce under it. Adieu,

BELLMOUR.

L E T T E R XXVI

GEORGE VILLARS, *Esq*; to COLONEL
BELLMOUR.

WAS it the letter of my friend Bellmour that I received; or the work of some accursed spirit which dictated that hellish epistle? Yes,—hellish I will call it,—for surely if all the inhabitants of the infernal regions

regions had been summoned in council to dictate one of a more diabolical nature, they would have been baffled in the attempt.—“By heavens! I’ll bear “it no longer.”—Bear what?—your own impious thoughts?—let these indeed go to their natural residence,—to the place from whence they came, the inmost receptacle of the lowest hell where they were suggested.—But oh! Bellmour, to talk of “suspicions with “respect to Charles Stanley,”—let such diabolical insinuations be for ever banished from your mind.—I must and will preserve you, if possible, even in spite of yourself.—I must and will conclude that the spirit with which that epistle was dictated, was but a transient visitor, and that he is now gone for ever, I trust to receive his
reward.

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reward.—Assure me of this immediately, which will still secure me,

Your's as ever,

G. VILLARS.

LETTER XXVII.

COLONEL BELLMOUR *to* GEORGE
VILLARS *Esq.*

YOUR last short letter truly alarmed me, wherein you refer to some former one written by me. —I have no recollection of any such epistle, containing the words which you have more particularly pointed at. —I know that I have received two
from

from you without having it in my power till now of answering your first,—for which at present I am very little fit, did not the pressing conclusion of your second demand it.—If, as you say, any such letter was written and sent to you, it must have been in the delirium of a fever, with which I was unfortunately seized a few hours after your letter came to hand.—I you have not destroyed it, you will therefore oblige me by returning a copy, that if possible, it may lead to some traces of the time when or the circumstances under which it was written.

I am far from being sufficiently recovered to give as particular an answer

swer as your letter requires.—The
 last, I hope, you will consider al-
 ready answered.—Though short, the
 attack was very severe, and for a
 few days, the physician apprehended
 me to be in the greatest danger.—
 But his unwearied efforts have been
 crowned with success,—and I am
 now sufficiently recovered not to fear
 a relapse.—You would scarcely know
 me, so much am I changed by this
 last fit of sickness;—but I have no
 fear that with returning health,—
 though I am now emaciated and al-
 most reduced to a skeleton, I shall
 soon recover my former constitutional
 form and shape.—Mrs. Bellmour,
 from an anxiety for my recovery
 which ought to endear her to me,
 has also suffered considerably in her
 health.

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health;—I wish her spirits may be revived and restored as quickly as I hope mine will be.—You will at present excuse my adding more than that I am,

most sincerely

Your's

BELLMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER XXVIII.

Miss COLVILLE to Mrs. BELLMOUR.

My dear friend,

WHAT you mentioned concerning Mr. Bellmour's absence from home is, I acknowledge, very mysterious.—I am not certain whether under the same circumstances, I should not myself be a little staggered as to the cause.—One thing indeed inclines me to judge on the favorable side;—you say that his
attention

attention and assiduities when at home are the same as usual,—from whence I would hope that it is merely accidental, and that it is not the consequence of any liberty he gives himself on account of Stanley's visit.—This at present therefore does not afford reason sufficient for any considerable uneasiness;—and where many causes may be assigned, though only conjectural, it is neither necessary nor advisable to chuse the worst.

But I am very much afraid that these untoward circumstances will nevertheless very much retard the recovery of your health.—Those shades which chequer your most pleasing views and cast a languor on your fairest

fairest hopes, will intercept the gladdening rays of bliss which lately darted through the gloomy cloud of adverse fortune.—It requires, perhaps, more resolution,—more fortitude and strength of mind, than you can at present command, to resist with effect those pressing importunities.—You will tell me that facts are stubborn and indisputable,—that to oppose an evidence so strong as demonstration's hand could scarce exceed, would not the name of cautious care deserve but madness obstinate and darkness dire.—But, my dear Mrs. Bellmour, let me beg you to recollect that the facts are not established ;—that, however plausible in appearance and theory, they are not supported by practice.—Mr. Bellmour is absent—Charles Stanley

is

is absent too;—the cause of the latter you know, but the reason of the former you are a stranger to.—A little time and patience may set this matter in its true light;—but you would most probably have cause to repent of any hasty measures which such inconsiderate determinations might occasion.—I conjure you, therefore, to let this business rest, and not to perplex yourself with imaginary evils.

I am almost tempted to think that you must before this time be convinced of the necessity of rousing your spirits,—and that you will no more tell me of permitting you to have a respite.—A respite!—alas! from what?—from that which alone can
 restore

restore you to health?—Would this be to act the part of a friend?—Should I deserve in any respect so sacred an appellation, if I suffered you to relapse into that languor and stupidity which has already been so alarming to every one but yourself?—And so because I will not give way to your unreasonable propensity, you are for quarreling with me.—A pretty expedient truly!—I wish I could see you in that temper,*——I should then have
greater

* It is presumed that the fair writer is not here turning advocate general for the passions of anger and resentment, the disposition of her correspondent being too well known to suppose it. In like manner the fair readers cannot be so far unacquainted

greater hopes of you than at present;
—and I promise you it would be my
business to take care that your spirits
should receive such an agitation as
would prove of infinite service to
you.—If you do not write to me
quickly, I assure you that the ne-
glect will not easily be forgiven by

Your truly affectionate friend

LOUISA COLVILLE.

acquainted with the character of Miss Col-
ville to consider this observation in any
other respect as her sentiment, than as it
probably contributes in this particular in-
stance to the advantage of her friend.
Editor.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

Mrs. BELLMOUR to Miss COLVILLE.

I Submit, my dear Louisa, to your last injunction, though very much unprepared to give you an answer.—Mr. Bellmour has lately been seized with a raging fever, which, though less violent at first, has thrown him into a state truly alarming.—He has been insensible almost from the first minute of the attack, and the physician is very unwilling to give his sentiments upon the event, which by

no means indicates a favorable opinion.—In the intervals of his delirium he seems to continue inactive and torpid,—but when the frenzy comes upon him, he raves and exclaims in the most furious manner.—Nothing but Stanley,—that Stanley,—that orphan,—that nobody knows who,—is he to have the first place in her esteem?—I'll not bear it, by heavens! —In this and the like unaccountable manner does he rave in the midst of his frenzy, without once noticing any person near him.

Judge, my dear Louisa, of the dreadful situation of your friend.—Have I not reason to fear that these reflections have been long fermenting
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in his mind, and that they have now grown to a pitch which has overwhelmed his reason, and deprived him of his senses?—Perhaps you will now acknowledge that my apprehensions were better grounded than you could have supposed,——and that I have not been so much mistaken in my conclusions as you imagined.—You must now be convinced that I have not acted so unreasonably as your letters have frequently represented, nor unnecessarily and willfully given way to desponding thoughts and gloomy reflections.—It is one consolation, how it has happened I am entirely ignorant, that he is always silent upon those subjects, whenever the physician comes to visit him ;—but, perhaps, it may be from some

1 2 glimmering

glimmering ray of reason which remains, that it is unnecessary for him to be acquainted with the particular cause of his affliction.—In that case the reflection returns with double force, and shews the malady to be more deeply rooted than merely in a dis-tempered imagination,—and that this is the *cause* rather than the *effect* of his frenzy.—I can add no more but that I am, my dear Louisa,

Your ever affectionate

MARIA BELLMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER XXX.

Miss COLVILLE to Mrs. BELMOUR.

My dear Mrs. Bellmour,

HOW sincerely do I sympathize and condole with you in your present unhappy and distressed situation.—Surely the least consideration of your case must extort compassion from the most flinty heart.—I acknowledge,—I feel that you have to much reason for thinking that my desire to banish those reflections from your mind might occasion my repre-

sentations to exceed their due bounds.
 —As you know my motives, I have no need to say that I repent of the measures therein taken ;—if they have only been productive of a temporary repose, you will readily acknowledge that they have been useful.

But perhaps it may yet be too soon to give up the hopes of seeing better days.—To despair, is the way to be for ever lost, and to cut off without a possibility of succour, every means of relief.—The time, I trust, is not yet come which leaves open only this dreadful resource ;—every avenue is not yet guarded,—every passage to a more favorable prospect is not yet closed.—Why then do
 you

you consider these heart-piercing acclamations as the *cause* of the frenzy which has seized Mr. Bellmour, and not rather as the *effects* only of a confused brain?—why take your view from the very worst side of things, so long as a better presents itself? —To argue from his conduct and expressions after reason has retreated and taken her flight, and from thence to judge of his motives and ideas when in full possession of her, is a very fallacious method;—you must and ought to consider it as such, and conclude that little attention is to be paid to it.

From such an effect, it is also to be observed, that in case of his re-

I 4

turning

turning health, you will be able with much greater facility to discover the true state of his mind.

This ought to give you some consolation.—You may easily introduce the subject, as originating with himself, though in his moments of frenzy,—and from thence be able to collect his real sentiments.—His countenance,—his confusion—his perplexity, will some way or other betray the secret if such be his unhappy state of mind;—and if not so, you will have the advantage of perceiving that these ejaculations were merely the consequence of his dis-temper, and have no foundation in cool and temperate reason.—I need
not

not observe that this ought at present to give you full satisfaction, and encourage you to bear up under your distress;— I trust it will have this effect upon you, which is the object of this letter from

my dear Maria's

most sincere friend,

LOUISA COLVILLE.

LETTER XXXI

GEORGE VILLARS, *Esq;* to COLONEL
BELLMOUR.

I Thank you, my dear Bellmour,
for your last letter, and am
happy to find you are so much re-
covered from your dreadful attack;
its effects, I hope will soon be re-
moved by the perfect re-establishment
of your health.—Villars most sincerely
wishes, that no future malady may
ever again affect you to write such
another letter, as the late dreadful
one

one which gave him such an alarm. but of which Bellmour is ignorant, —The measure of destroying it was for some time debated in the mind of your friend, but at last the contrary opinion prevailed, and he thereupon resolved to preserve it.—A copy of this is here inclosed* at your earnest and pressing request;—whether it may be productive of what you propose from it, I cannot determine.

I was much affected when the news of your sickness was brought to me, —and had resolved to write a short letter to Mrs. Bellmour, to enquire into the nature of it, when your own

* See Letter XXV of this Volume.

ter arrived with the account of your recovery.—Dreadful indeed must have been the malady, as the effects but too evidently demonstrate.—Mrs. Bellmour, I hope, together with yourself, are fast recovering;—the pleasure it will give me to find that you are perfectly restored, may be conceived but can scarcely be expressed.—You have much to attribute to the skill and attention of your physician, as well as to the assiduity of Mrs. Bellmour. I am,

as ever, Your's

G. VILLARS:

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

COLONEL BELLMOUR to GEORGE

VILLARS, *Esq*;

My dear Villars,

THE shortness of your epistle almost leaves me without matter to reply.—What?—had you no anecdote to furnish out a dozen more lines?—no news of importance sufficient to exercise your pen, or employ my time?—no account of a trip to Scotland, to visit the son of Vulcan in his sacerdotal capacity?—Has the Lemnian

Lemnian god of Gretna Green no votaries of Hymen?—have no sacrifices been lately made at his altar?—Surely, George, you could have furnished me with something of this nature worth recording,—for at this time I am incapable of reflecting upon more serious subjects.—The disorder has left a stupor in my head, which renders it not only improper, but I am also unwilling and even adverse to indulge in more solid and momentous speculations.

Your former letter therefore, must still remain without an answer,—I dare not yet trust myself to think upon any thing which carries with it the least appearance of difficulty.—My health

health seems to put in its strongest claim for all my attention, and I have no inclination to regard any thing which does not in some measure contribute to its restoration.—By my foolish neglect of the means which would have secured to me the enjoyment of it, I have impaired my constitution, and hazarded my existence;—and surely it would be unpardonable to split again upon the same rock, from whence I have lately so narrowly escaped with life.—Villars will excuse my declining this subject at present, till all my faculties and powers of thinking are more perfectly restored;—when that will be, I shall not yet, I fear, be able to determine, as my strength returns but very slowly.

At

Lemnian god of Greta Green no votaries of Hymen?—have no sacrifices been lately made at his altar?—Surely, George, you could have furnished me with something of this nature worth recording,—for at this time I am incapable of reflecting upon more serious subjects.—The disorder has left a stupor in my head, which renders it not only improper, but I am also unwilling and even adverse to indulge in more solid and momentous speculations.

Your former letter therefore, must still remain without an answer.—I dare not yet trust myself to think upon any thing which carries with it the least appearance of difficulty.—My health

health seems to put in its strongest claim for all my attention, and I have no inclination to regard any thing which does not in some measure contribute to its restoration.—By my foolish neglect of the means which would have secured to me the enjoyment of it, I have impaired my constitution, and hazarded my existence ;——and surely it would be unpardonable to split again upon the same rock, from whence I have lately so narrowly escaped with life.—Villars will excuse my declining this subject at present, till all my faculties and powers of thinking are more perfectly restored ;—when that will be, I shall not yet, I fear, be able to determine, as my strength returns but very slowly.

At

At present, therefore, I can only think of amusements;—and I know not how it is, those which are most simple and childish, I find to be the most pleasing.—I sometimes endeavour to engage Mrs Bellmour in them, but she generally seems to feel their unmeaning insignificance, —and whenever she does join, my importunities rather than her own choice for the most part prevail. Adieu, my dear Villars.

Your's as ever,

BELLMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

Mrs. BELLMOUR to Miss COLVILLE.

My dear friend,

YOU still retain the same happy talent, in every possible situation, of representing things in the most amiable point of view.—I cannot but admire your profound penetration,—and I must and will affirm that there is something in your style and manner which is very unusual.—You shall not always have your own opinion;—for in this you must
give

give me leave to decide.——After a most severe affliction, the physician gives me hopes of Mr. Bellmour's recovery.——He says that some favourable symptoms afford reason to conclude that the danger is past, and that if he does not relapse, which he thinks is improvable, a few days will discover an alteration for the better.——Whether it is that my sanguine expectations of what you propose enlivens my spirits, or my relief from the anxiety I have felt for his recovery, is uncertain;—I sometimes fancy that I already begin to find the good effects of his malady.—But these imaginations are quickly succeeded by a train of doubts and uncertain surmises, which at last tend to no other purpose than to con-
found

found reason, and involve the mind in endless perplexity.—In vain have I repeatedly endeavoured to find out the cause;—all my attempts to that desirable purpose are fruitless and unavailing.—Why should those gloomy—those pensive—those desponding thoughts, say I to myself, from a wish to adopt your generous ideas,—why should they interfere to interrupt my happiness, and to cloud and obscure my hopes?—For such harsh thoughts no cause can I assign, for such an object my endeavours tend to no account;—for something yet unknown these dark forebodings of my gloomy mind, to which my fears and apprehensions lead the way, point out a mazy labyrinth of woe as still behind.

My

My dear Louisa will make every allowance for my present situation, and not think me guilty of any neglect in omitting to notice her last favor more particularly.—It is enough that the state of my mind requires it to ensure its being granted.—I am therefore, as ever,

my dear friend,

Your's

MARIA BELLMOUR.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

Miss COLVILLE to Mrs. BELLMOUR.

STILL, my dear Mrs. Bellmour—still do you indulge those gloomy apprehensions which darken and obscure your brightest hopes?—How often have I desired you to throw aside every thing of a pensive and untoward nature?—and must the same admonitions be again repeated,—the same pressing requests be again urged?—Surely, Maria,
you

your enquiries after matter to feed these desponding thoughts must give you great pleasure and satisfaction, —or you would not so very tenaciously adhere to them.

Deceive not yourself,—they are,—they must be the marks and characters of despair.—What other source can such reflections have, which fill the mind with grief and spectres dire, but those of melancholy and despair?—I am truly concerned to find you still given way to such alarming thoughts.

Mr. Bellmour's affliction, I must repeat it, may be converted to the most salutary purposes.—If you do
not

not put in practice what I wrote in my last, as soon as he is in a condition for it, you need only blame yourself for the consequences;—by suffering your lethargic habit to prevail at present, all your fairest expectations may be defeated, and the the dawning of a returning spring be blasted by an unkind season.

It is your business to cherish the promising prospect, and to supply those rising juices which nature seems so kindly to lend;—to permit such a glorious opportunity of returning happiness to pass away without due encouragement, would surely merit the severest censure.—Observe kind nature's works, nor yet permit the
hopeful

matter?—why do not you instantly tell me?—why do you keep me on the rack of suspense?—Oh! Louisa, —such a scene—alas! I fear my feeble frame to tell the dreadful tale will not itself support.—Gracious heav'n!—assist me with strength and resolution sufficient to execute this last severe task, and then most willingly shall I resign my soul for ever;—for life from me has long its charms withheld, but now the cumbrous burthen weighs me down to join its native dust.

Welcome,--thrice welcome is the stern decree,
Which from my pains and troubles sets me free

Poor Charles!—alas! I feel myself
unable to being, and yet am anxious
to come to the close, that I a last
farewell

farewell may take of life, for which
 no longer room for me if left.—
 He returned from his visit on Thurs-
 day evening, rather unexpectedly,—
 having given us no advice of his in-
 tention.—His presence inspired me
 with a joy I had long been a stran-
 ger to, and my feelings were visibly
 demonstrated by my extraordinary at-
 tention to him.—Mr. Bellmour at
 first seemed equally glad to see him
 returned in health and spirits;—but
 the continuance of my attention un-
 happily produced a very sensible alter-
 ation, which, for some time, I did
 not perceive.—At last the fatal cause
 of all my griefs like lightning keen
 and piercing was disclos'd;—the fire
 which from his eyes began to flash
 convinced me but too late that I had

err'd in hoping that an equal cause of joy possessed the heart of Bellmour. —I no sooner perceived it, than all my former apprehensions rush'd like a torrent upon my mind, and fast closed up the faculties of speech. —I was instantly struck dumb ;—Mr. Bellmour perceived it, and from thence as if his presence was a check upon our conversation,—in a short time found a pretence for retiring.—I was unwilling to give the alarm to Charles, and therefore made an apology for Mr. Bellmour's absence, as if on account of his late illness.

The subject of our discourse soon afterwards was changed.—Miss Colville has not forgot the commission
with.

with which she charged me;—I took this opportunity of executing it, so far as at that time I judged it necessary.—The next day I proposed repeating it,——but Charles did not appear to breakfast, and a servant was sent to enquire the cause;—he felt himself much fatigued, he said, and should thank Mrs. Bellmour to send his breakfast up stairs.—He was then in bed,—but it was known that he afterwards rose and dressed himself, soon and it was evident that he had something of importance on his mind.—

—Mr. Bellmour was very unusually attentive to every motion of the whole family;—and his curiosity seemed to attract the notice of the servants:—

After he found that Stanley was risen, he would frequently sleep softly

to his door, as if to be satisfied what he was doing.—Sometimes he perceived him in a pensive, musing posture,——and at other times, as if speaking to himself, he heard several indistinct and inarticulate sounds;—Mr. Bellmour attributed the cause of this to his consciousness that somebody might overhear him.—Charles did not appear the whole day;—he feigned indisposition, which I partly doubted,—and Mr. Bellmour seemed to be conscious of his own conduct the preceding evening and thought that might occasion it.—But this was no foundation to lead to a discovery of his sentiments —Towards the evening, Mr. Bellmour, still anxious for the cause listened again to Charles's soliloquies, and then heard or thought he heard the following exclamation

exclamation very distinctly.—“ Is it
 “ possible that she loves me?—yes,
 “ —I perceive it,—I am convinced
 “ of it,—her whole conduct has been
 “ an evident proof of it,—and I
 “ will return her love with equal
 “ ardor ;—no obstacles from hence-
 “ forth shall prevent my possessing
 “ so inestimable a jewel.——It is
 “ enough that I am beloved, and I
 “ am happy.”—Judge then from the
 state of Mr. Bellmour’s mind the
 effect it must be productive of, when
 he applied all this as spoken of your
 unfortunate Maria, which had her
 friend for its object,—and that he
 considered himself as the obstacle al-
 luded to.—The door was instantly
 bursted open,——“ defend thyself,
 “ traitor, ’ cried he—“ but thy at-

“ attempts are vain,—die therefore as
 “ thou deservest,” at the same mo-
 ment running him through the body.
 —Then rushing out, he left him
 weltring in his blood,—and, having
 heard a noise in the room, as he was
 running down stairs, I met him at
 the bottom with the countenance of
 a Fury —“ Go,” says he, “ and
 “ take care of that Stanley.”—He
 left the house immediately, took horse,
 and has never since been heard of.—
 A surgeon was sent for with all speed
 to poor Charles, who pronounced the
 wound to be mortal, and that tho’
 life may be prolonged for a short
 time, there was scarce a possibility
 of a recovery ——This morning his
 exhausted nature gave way, and the
 dear unfortunate youth expired;—he
 had

had been insensible and scarce alive from his great loss of blood for two days before.—Here let me close the scene,—after having with great difficulty accounted for the tragical event, as his extreme weakness from time to time permitted him to reveal it.—Farewell, my friend, and prepare yourself to hear of the death of your correspondent;—her heart is broke, nor can she long survive. Adieu, once more,

and for ever,

Wednesday Evening,

10 o'Clock.

M. BELLMOUR.

It may suffice to inform the reader that the remains of the poor unfortunate youth, were deposited the week

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following

following, with as little ceremony as possible, in the family vault in the adjoining parish,—that Mr. Bellmour was about three weeks after discovered in a most deplorable situation in one of his friend Villars's woods, when he had but just strength enough left to relate the tragical scene before he paid the tribute of nature,—and that Mrs. Bellmour lingered about six weeks, and then expired.

Mr. Villars took the care of conveying the corps of his friend to Moreton Abbey,—after he had sent a messenger to acquaint them of his death, with all possible privacy, whose share of unhappiness was not small;—and Miss Colville, on receiving the

the news of the fatal catastrophe, hastened to take a last view of the body of the amiable youth, whose endowments merited a better lot,—and to condole with her friend in hopes of restoring her to a settled state of mind.—Her feelings on the occasion may better be conceived than described.

Mrs. Bellmour desired these two friends to continue with her to perform the same friendly office to her remains, and by her last will divided her whole fortune betwixt them, therein strongly recommended an union as the best tribute of affection they could pay to the memory of their departed friends.—It is enough to
add

add that their unavoidable acquaintance discovered a similarity of sentiment, which soon ripened to a degree productive of the desired effect; —and they now live, blessed with every domestic happiness, of which two lovely pledges, a son and daughter, the fruit of their marriage, are far from being the least considerable foundation.

F I N I S.

23 JUL 68

